LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. Copyright No. PS 1567

Shelf .E225 J6

1881

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

SKY FARM.

JOURNAL OF

A FARMER'S DAUGHTER

BY

ELAINE GOODALE

ONE OF THE AUTHORS OF "APPLE BLOSSOMS," ETC.

MAY 13 1881
No. 7958

NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
27 & 29 WEST 23D STREET.
1881

PS1567
.E225 S6
1881

Copyright by
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
1881

JOURNAL OF A FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

APRIL.

Sky Farm, April Second.

AFTER all, say what they may about the farmer's life and labor, it is a pleasant, aye, and a profitable thing to be a farmer's daughter! Of course, I do not mean by a farmer's daughter that sturdy, red-cheeked maid-of-all-work, who kneads bread and picks up potatoes with the same admirable vigor and elasticity; her place in the household is more nearly supplied by our own black-eyed Mary,

> "Brief of skirt, with ankles bare,
> Loose of kerchief, and loose of hair,"

as Whittier makes her.

But the higher opportunities offered to one who stands a little aside alike from the en-

grossing toil and every-day interests of the farm, with a realizing sense of its value as art, as life, are not to be lightly regarded.

Yesterday I happened upon papa's note and account books, glanced at the memorandum of farm expenses and the journal of farm work, and it came over me as a happy thought to keep, myself, an eight-months' journal of life on a farm, from the stand-point of the farmer's daughter; a daily and weekly record of its picturesque phases, a swift analysis of its subtle and varying tendencies, a full and direct recognition of the grand creative power which makes its motive and its end.

April Fifth.

SITTING quietly by the window late this morning, after a ten minutes' run in the raw, chilly air, with clouds and sunshine chasing each other overhead, I took in at a glance the broad sweep of wood and meadow and the rich background of departing hills, in the desperate attempt to forget for an hour the dull, cold

purple of the naked forest, the dead, pale brown of the grass and fallen leaves, the roughened road, with a film of ice over ruts and hollows,—all the hard, unlovely features of the rude March-like day.

It is one of the odd freaks of our New England spring, this sudden stiffening and numbing of April into a mere chrysalis, from which, a day later, a few degrees more of warmth will unfold a pair of butterfly wings. But the elemental power and splendor of this outlook from my window are the same at all seasons, and the moods of the mountains, lofty and terrible, are not those of the plains or the narrow ranges of lesser hills. It is this very isolation and separateness, indeed, in the near surroundings of our home, which make it a thing apart from the rural prettiness of the neighboring village, and compel a like nobleness and simplicity in man, lest his rude or careless touch mar the unity of nature.

Looking at the landscape to-day, with an unprejudiced and beauty-loving eye, how pain-

ful are the unsightly patches of clearing on the mountain side, the wide reaches of meadow-land cut up into irregular fields, the unscrupulous highway with its double line of rail fence disfiguring the foreground!

All this would be very hard to bear did we not remember that Nature is a patient and a bountiful mother, for with all the slights and injuries we put upon her we are still her children. The genial soil still yields itself to the plow, the warm rains swell the dropped seed and sharpen the springing blades, the panting oxen share man's heritage of labor and lift forgiving eyes to his own; for it is written that through all the earth seed-time and harvest shall not cease.

April Sixth.

As nerve and sinew, finely strung,
That knit the mighty frame of man,
Each chord is tense, the trees among,
Since months and years began.

And swift as throbs the youthful heart,
Each moment racked with blissful pain,
In every limb the sap doth start
Thro' every tingling vein.

THE prophecy of yesterday's wind and cold is already fulfilled; the sweet miracle of April wrought in a night; and to-day a warm south wind is blowing, the middle distance is obscured by an opaline haze, and away down in the "brook hollow," at the foot of the long sloping meadows, rises a little thread of blue smoke, vanishing into thin air before it reaches the tops of those tall maples. Following that wavering ring of vapor, and treading heavily on the spongy meadow-ground, while the liquid notes of the blue-bird drop down at our feet; then crossing the noisy little brook by a narrow and uneven line of stepping-stones, we stumble suddenly upon a camp-fire in the woods, with a huge round kettle swung over it gypsy-fashion, and hear from all the trees about the steady drip-drip of the sap.

This fascinating pursuit of sugar-making, "half work and half play," as John Burroughs calls it, is also equally attractive to outsiders, and one may sit by the hour on this warm springy board, with feet to the fire and back

against a log, watching the shadowy figures hovering on the outskirts of the drifting smoke and lapping flames, or dipping one's cup into the seething liquid, reinforced now and again by pailfuls of fresh sap, and therefore seldom very sweet, after all. Better still do we find it to wander off into the outlying woods; to taste the ebbing life-blood of the maple with lips against the wound, and thrill with its subtle suggestions; to shake the golden dust from drooping tassels of the alder, and part their dingy mat of leaves in search of the swelling, pink-tipped buds of the arbutus; to drink the crystal-cold brook water out of the hollow of the hand, and push bare chilled fingers into a network of clinging roots in the damp, fresh-smelling earth. The maple camp seems a sufficient centre to this wild, free life, quite as real and necessary, indeed, as the fire on our own hearth-stone, indicated now in its turn by the faint blue smoke from the chimney; and although there is a general scattering of our group as the mid-day meal is announced, those

enthusiasts who remain to roast eggs and apples in the ashes may not improbably have the best of it. Here they dream away the hours of the long and silent afternoon, musing from time to time over the open pages of a favorite book, which draws an added charm from its surroundings; and perhaps when the shadows of evening begin to fall, and the trees to loom up like ghosts in the lurid light of the fire, the truants of morning return for a farewell look, and all walk slowly back again in the dim twilight, under the great white stars, shutting their doors at last with a lingering look and sigh on the silence and the mystery of night.

Thro' April woods our way we take,
Alive to every hurrying mood,
Till mingled starts and languors make
A fever in the blood.

But he whose thirsty lips would drain
The life it is not his to know,
How should he prick the swelling vein
And cause the sap to flow!

April Ninth.

NOW that the brief interval of sugar-making is a thing of the past, leaving no trace in the wild woods save a rude stone fireplace on the charred and blackened earth, and a rapidly healing scar in the kingly forehead of more than one forest monarch, the willing farmer throws aside this pretty and almost unpremeditated by-play, and becomes absorbed in the more ponderous preparations for the season's work. The heavier labor that occupies these first warm days has as little of the picturesque about it as anything in the operations of the farm; nevertheless, it contains an element of vital interest, being a part of the needful patience and thoroughness which lay the sure foundation of the farmer's toil.

The exquisite cleanliness of the woods and fields is something so rapid and unseen as to be distinctly unattainable in the garden or the barnyard; yet even here the clumsy attempts

of man are only made possible through the continual delicate processes of nature. Loads upon loads of manure have all day been zig-zagging heavily through the barn meadows, till now the prospective potato field is dotted with dark conical heaps. Leaving my custard midway, I went out early in the afternoon to search the mows for hens' eggs, and regarded with pleasure the neatness and thoroughness of the work from its other side ; for while two men had cleared out the litter of the barnyard, another handy fellow, a born mechanic, had been straightening loose boards, tinkering at latches, and putting things in order generally. In the same way, only far more quickly and silently, the debris of the woods is removed ; the heaps of fallen leaves and the dead bodies of birds and animals are absorbed into the soil and help to enrich it, aiding in the inevitable metamorphosis of matter from one form of life into another.

Somewhat later in the day I flew to the garden, where a miniature bonfire was blazing, the

dense smoke veering rapidly from one side to another, and witnessed the purification by fire, the extremest test of all. Dry leaves, raked lightly off the brown grass quickening to green, vines and brush and dead twigs broken from the apple-trees, in a few moments nothing was left of them all but a little heap of white ashes, while beyond the orchard wall a surging flame still raged along the straggling hedge of raspberry bushes.

Toward nightfall, again, a little plowing was done, and immediately a light rain pattered on the naked sod and filled the air with sweet, aromatic odors; the lingering smell of smoke mixed with the fresh, earthy scent of the upturned furrow, and the vague, delicious breath of opening arbutus in the woods.

April Twelfth

AFTER the rough spring cleaning is over, and before the ground is dry enough for ordinary field-work, the first care of the farmer—if he take any pride in it at all—is always for

his garden. Ready and watchful is his care for this guarded precinct, which provides his table with things of more immediate import than the field crops of buckwheat and potatoes, and maintains an equal intimacy with the farm lad in flannel shirt and overalls, who follows the plow on April mornings, and the little kitchen maid who stands three months later amid the rustling corn, stripping their green linings from the score of milky ears in her blue-checked apron.

Yet, after all, who that recognizes the near relations of land and home will smile at these trim rows, so clean and free from weeds, or grumble at the sensitive pride, akin to that of the careful housekeeper, with which a true farmer orders his garden.

These grave consultations with child and wife, these close adaptations to the imperious wants of growing things, this detailed arrangement and minute execution have a place and a power of their own in the emphasis that they give to the demands and the rewards of home.

April Fifteenth.

O pregnant mystery of life,
A strife divine, an endless strife!
O germ but faintly understood,
Whose growth is hid in motherhood.

With instinct blind, the fruitful earth
Gives grass and grain a common birth,
And, swayed by law of kind to kind,
Earth's creature yields, as deaf and blind.

IT would seem that spring is the only time to be born — the time of the beginnings of things, when the woods and fields bring forth their myriads, when unnumbered winged and creeping things increase and multiply, when

"The mother of months in meadow and plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain."

And not only the untamed dwellers in the forest, but the more domestic and comfortable creatures of the barnyard, who have gained from continual human contact a certain humanizing influence which may or may not compensate for the loss of their savage free-

dom, find the time big with promise of speedy fulfilment.

Certain it is that whatever may be the value to them of such mutual aid and companionship as exist between us, to us there is something of preciousness in the relation, and a pleasant excitement pervades the household when the good news is told. No wonder, then, that papa's announcement of a little heifer calf—made before we were up in the morning—created quite a sensation in this uneventful life of ours. The moment breakfast was over we all went eagerly out to welcome the new arrival, to exclaim over its baby beauty and vigor, the exquisite varying color of its tender skin, and the appealing look in its large and liquid eyes. One thing only damped the loving enthusiasm, and made the supposed benefactor feel himself an inhuman despot, guilty of unnatural cruelty—a deep, pathetic *moo* from the unhappy mother robbed of her rightful offspring, which hushed at once the general jubilee, and struck a momentary awe into the faces of the listeners. Such

are the inevitable conditions of a second and hardly less complicated form of slavery.

O mystery of life's intent!
Strange shock of woe, untimely sent!
O wild, sweet hope at one with pain—
Panting and dumb, she yields again!

The joy was hers, whate'er betide;
The place is empty at her side;
By that sharp pang, all joy above,
She drains the mystic draught of love.

April Seventeenth.

AMONG the pleasantest of rural sounds is the cheerful cackle of hens in the early morning, and the calling together of her feathered flock at breakfast time by one or another of the child-owners is surely a pretty sight. Especially is this true of a colony where each individual Biddy is recognized and petted by her mistress, and even the week-old broods of younglings are known by sight and by name.

Yesterday a hen was set,—the clean straw rounded out by loving hands to a wide, deep hollow for the soft protecting breast, the fresh

eggs, counted and marked, laid evenly down, and the anxious, clucking little mother smoothed and fed. How dainty and domestic she looked to our partial eyes, her soft brown feathers composed to a praiseworthy neatness and regularity of outline, with hay-seed sifting lightly over her from a niche in the wall, and golden-tawny lights and shadows lying all about her in the warm stillness! A systematic round of daily visits for three long weeks of patient waiting, will insure to her the daily food and exercise she needs; slowly the hidden germs will quicken into life close underneath that brooding warmth of wings, till a heart beats in each tiny cell, and a baby chick is knocking at the door, and then,—but let us drop such flights of fancy, and count instead those other chickens hatched to-day.

Anxious and flurried and somewhat distrustful is the proud and happy mother, now lifted from her nest, clucking hurriedly and worriedly through all the disturbance, and following every motion of theirs, or ours, with watchful

eager eyes of brightest brown. And those twelve little fluttering, chirping things, like balls of animated down,—the cunning black ones, and the oddly or prettily marked brown ones, and the fluffy yellow ones,—how warm and dainty and cosy they are!

With evident unwillingness on the part of our youngest, they are once more consigned to the hen's protecting care, and with what tender vehemence she coaxes them to eat, never stopping to satisfy her own importunate hunger, but encouraging them to huddle together as soon as may be under the downy covert of her wings, whence subdued stirrings and peepings before long announce that we had better for the present take our leave.

April Twenty-first.

BUT it is not so easy to stand guard over the turkey's nest of freckled eggs, and pretty, pale-green brood; for the wild, shy creature accepts no foster-mother's care, and makes the warm, scented woodlands her favorite hiding-

place. Only by following her at a distance when she goes out to lay, is it possible to discover her secret, and the daily quest had long been unsuccessful, when I entered on that long and fortunate pursuit which I shall now relate.

The beginning of the chase would certainly have been puzzling to the uninitiated observer. Slowly, stealthily, turning aside now and then, and pecking at the dry grass with assumed carelessness, the would-be mother kept on her solitary way, and strolling about with equally studied negligence, I kept her just in sight. It soon became evident, from her somewhat more hurried step, her frequent diving into clumps of laurel and rustling among fallen leaves, and an indescribable anxiety in her air, that she was looking for a nest as yet only existing in imagination. This knowledge doubled the difficulties of the task, but it doubled the pleasures as well; and from a wondering interest in the unknown motives which guided that seemingly irrational choice, I came to feel that I was rudely invading her dearest privacy.

If I had any right there, at all events she did not recognize it, for I well knew that the slightest intimation of my presence would excite her suspicions and put an end to my search.

Her light, quick step was distinctly audible, and I followed her with ear and eye, looking sharply, listening breathlessly, and keenly alive to the nameless charm of the pursuit; till, after a half hour or so of indecision, my quarry entered an evergreen thicket, beside three tall chestnuts, and—did not return.

Sinking readily down at the foot of a neighboring tree, whence I could look on a vista of distant hills, I abandoned myself to the deliciousness of day-dreams for a long interval of waiting, to the repeated accompaniment of Emerson's lines of magic:

> "Soft on the south wind sleeps the haze;
> So on thy broad, mystic van
> Lie the opal-colored days.

And when the timid creature had departed, with a sort of shy exultation in her manner, it

was from something of a kindred mood that I parted the thick glossy leaves, and saw the yet warm treasure, large, white, pointed at one end, sprinkled with the very color of the dead-brown leaves on which it lay, and touching me with a half-resolve never to betray that dainty episode which I had seen.

April Twenty-fourth.

There's a flash of wings in the sunny heaven,
And the cool, bright air of morn,
In the sweep of a glossy plume, is riven
With the bolt of a noble scorn.
Our shouts of welcome ring blithe and clear,
And the echoing woods reply
With a mocking glee to the spring of the year,
As the prince of the air skims by.

The robin hops round the open door,
For the tid-bit he likes best;
And the sparrow over the vine-bound porch
Is lining her dainty nest;
With a startled cry from her covert gone
The phœbe sobs and grieves;
And the thrush is silenced and made forlorn
By a rain on the budding leaves.

But the swallow comes in the sweet mid-spring,
And gladdens our waiting sight

With the delicate, stately curve of his wing,
And his haughty, beautiful flight.
He stoops, like a king, to the old barn-door,
In the old, familiar way,
And his nest clings fast, as it clung before,
To the rafters bare and gray.

There's a twitter of love 'neath the dusky eaves,
Where the twilight lingers late,
And crooning a ditty, as lovers use,
He is wooing his tender mate ;
There's a whisper and stir where the stillness broods ;
There's a shadowy warmth most dear ;
And we turn with a look from the April woods,
For the swallows at last are here !

April Twenty-seventh.

I HAVE followed the plow for half a day, not with any material agency, but by the unaided force of imagination ; and the straight, dark furrows running the entire length and breadth of that ten-acre field are to me the lines of a great unfinished poem in an untranslatable tongue :

"For Nature beats in perfect tune,
And rounds with rhyme her every rune."

Half sitting, half lying on a broad, flat stone against a gnarled and lichened tree-trunk, I refreshed my eyes with the cool, shady tints of the newly-turned sod, or followed untiringly backward and forward the heavy movements of a yoke of oxen, and the proud, quick step of the more elegantly and slightly formed horses, not to speak of the comparatively superb and flexible attitudes of the men behind them—physically most perfect of all.

I had taken up my position on a swell of rising ground at the margin of the woods; the plowing was two fields off, and in the background a near mountain slope lay dark and bare against the horizon, while at its base red maples flamed out in exquisite and indefinable grace of outline. In the whole picture was something rich and splendid—a primal beauty and significance which was not at all disturbed by the needful human element. And, more than all, the slow, steady rhythm of hard labor—labor material but not coarse—moved or appeared to move in nature's absolute round of passive beauty and effortless power.

April Twenty-ninth.

WHO has not felt that strange something, at once refreshing and tantalizing, in the soft waywardness of an April rain?

It is in the press of a busy and an anxious season; the farmer and his men crowd needful work into the shortest possible space; yet with what provoking unconcern the light showers flit daily over the sky, keeping men and horses under shelter by those gentle ministrations without which all their toil were vain!

Now that the heavens have proclaimed a truce to the plow, he whose hand is wont to guide it must wait, with whatever half-concealed impatience, for Nature to delay and set aside his finite plans and purposes in the workings of her own infinite wisdom. And we who look on at the mingling of pretty episodes with her slow unfolding, may lend an idle hour to these wonderful last touches, created out of nothing by the "fingers of the rain."

There are no broad ripples of divinest light and shadow to attract the eye toward distant grain fields,—only bare rough ground, and meadows clothed upon with green, where milky houstonias are spilled broadcast, and mixed along the uneven roadsides with the warm and perfumed blue of early violets.

Yet beside hidden water-courses in the valley below, the willow is clouded with tender color, and the muffled sound of the brook mixes with the patter of eddying drops, while shifting strains of woodland music float through the air.

Such are the rapid and sure indications by which this April shower fulfils its mission; willing, indeed, that he who has learned, in part, to adapt himself to all Nature, should thus be swayed by her lightest mood and wait upon her pleasure.

MAY.

May First.

"Where shall we keep the holiday,
And duly greet the entering May?
Too strait and low our cottage doors,
And all unmeet our carpet floors;
Nor spacious court, nor monarch's hall,
Suffice to hold the festival."

EMERSON'S "May-Day."

AND the answer of the poet is the answer consciously or unconsciously given alike by poet and plowman: the command to a wise and temperate gladness in the open air. The Earth holds continual festival, the stir of her wings and her sweet ecstacies of song are part of the everlasting necessities; for she is neither drudge nor merry-maker, her weeping and her laughter are one with the painless throbbing of her heart.

But for these men who have lain in her bosom, whose arms she strengthened with sinews of iron, whose arteries are hot with her blood, what is their reward for the work of a lifetime in wind and sun? Will she not sweeten their toil and surround their bed? Or is it the dregs of that brimming cup, humanity, which weakens the crimson tide and inflames it with evil passions? And those who have grown still further away from the all-mother, whose hand is palsied, whose cheek is sallow and cold, whose vices eat into flesh and bone and fester in unwholesome darkness, her child-hearted joy is not for them who will not accept her first conditions. For they who rejoice with her now rejoice with her always.

May Fifth.

ANOTHER and a no less striking and beautiful development of the mother-instinct than those already witnessed among our four-footed friends, was fully exhibited this morning by our petted favorite, Kate, who has just be-

come the mother of a fine colt. Gentle, yet spirited, of a sensitive and high-strung temperament, united with great docility and intelligence, the unreasoning fierceness which mingled with her love was all the more to be wondered at.

Placing herself before the new-born foal, she would charge from side to side of her narrow pen, showing her teeth in the most vicious manner, and lashing out behind at any sign of approach, however friendly and hesitating. The men were literally afraid to go near her, and her boldest admirers kept their distance. Huddled together in an interested and somewhat excited group behind the heavy farm gate, we watched the pair with sympathetic eyes, our admiration for the long-legged, white-faced colt already subordinated to a tenderness and almost awe for the holy office of maternity, which, even in its brute instincts, is proudly triumphant, as well as nobly enduring, and full of a terrible, grand beauty.

Had we made our arrangements to separate

them by force, I doubt if the plan would have succeeded, or if our proud, high-spirited mare would ever have forgotten the insult. Even in the slight struggle which accompanied a return to pasture, our sympathies were all with her, and we should hardly have been sorry to see harsh treatment or needless provocation of any sort, on the part of the man who held her, punished as immediately and justly as she would, in all probability, have punished it.

May Eighth.

FOR more than a week now the cows have been roaming over their broad, rich pastures, and cropping the sweet, juicy herbage with unrestrained delight. And we, even while admiring their delicacy of form and softness of color, their slow, undulating motion, or graceful grouping of reposeful attitudes, are almost inclined to envy the exquisite sensation which must attend these sweet first days of freedom. After the cold ground, with its covering of trodden straw, the light, springy turf under

their feet; after the dingy barns, the green and forest-skirted field; after dry, dusty locks of hay, the never-palling taste of tender young grass, and the delicious coolness of running water! Where shall we find for our educated palates such keen and sweet delight?

What do the cows do with themselves all day, I wonder, from the time of the farm-boy's shouts and urging in the dewy morning till he follows them home at night? Do they turn from breaking their fast to stray through the dusk twilight of the woods, crossing and re-crossing its tangled mazes by half-familiar paths? Do they stand knee-deep in the brown brook, and listen to the rustle of winds and the plash of water? Have they any dim sense of fellowship with the oven-bird under the overarching roots, and the slim, dark cat-bird in the alders; with the woodchuck peeping from his burrow with bright brown eyes, and the mole sliding rapidly along the warm mud?

As to freedom and friendliness of intercourse there is little to be said, but yesterday

an accident happened in the pasture, the nature of which is still a mystery. Our little Daisy, the pet of the children and the pride of the men, was found lying on her side, while the other cows were gathered close about her, trampling her with their feet, pushing her with their horns, and evidently annoying her by their apparently idle curiosity. When the pretty creature was brought slowly up, limping painfully and breathing hard, among the chorus of pitiful exclamations a wonder was expressed at this heartless conduct on the part of her companions, and it was not pleasant to remember that a similar practice, somewhat disguised, is still current among civilized human beings.

May Tenth.

I HAVE long been assured that the pig is a much-abused animal, and having just been out to view a recent purchase with appreciative eyes, shall very properly seize the opportunity to do him tardy justice. His appearance is nothing remarkable, it is true, yet a sleek,

comely pig, with a short, curly tail and mildly inquisitive nose, is, to my taste, far from unpleasing; and what could be prettier than a litter of young pigs, round and pink and dainty as such babies always are, with a bewitching mixture of infantile charms and infantile helplessness!

The pig is one of the most valuable of domestic animals, and the good qualities which entitle him to this distinction constitute likewise his chief claim to the respect and liking so rarely vouchsafed him by the farmer's daughter. "Thou shalt not wash dishes nor yet feed the swine," are among the lover's inducements to a maiden seemingly of this description; and still there is surely little hardship in the offering of an occasional basket of pea-pods or head of lettuce, or even a daily bucket of milk-and-meal to this grateful and affectionate little creature. The refuse of the garden and the table never comes amiss to him, and his grunts and squeals of joyful appreciation are payment for all our trouble.

Exception is sometimes taken to the manners of our *protégé*, but for my part I find him, when favorably situated, invariably cleanly in his habits, and polite in his behavior. In proof of his ambition and undeveloped intelligence, it is only necessary to point to the many well-known examples of "learned pigs;" and in fact I have reason to believe, from the results of a friend's experience, that the "mute, inglorious" inmate of a neighbor's unpretending pigsty may be readily trained to the display of surprising knowledge and cleverness.

May Twelfth.

THE tender blades of grass are springing thick in the meadow, and the hardy dandelions are spangling it with gold, while yet the neighboring field is rough and bare, and the farmer is dropping potatoes or scattering grain. For the wild growths follow each other in such rapid, unbroken succession from spring to fall that a cultivated crop, advancing by slow stages, is a noticeable feature in the

landscape. There is no well-defined limit, either to the preparing of the soil or the planting of tubers, but for a period of six weeks or more the two are all-important. And while to the looker-on there is no sense of monotony, there is nevertheless room for little variation on the old themes of patient, unremitting toil, with man and beast unequally yoked together.

Here, again, we make question of sympathy and understanding between the two; and while there are, of course, illustrations from one extreme to the other, it must be said that among ordinary farm laborers there is less of feeling and observance than one would suppose. Going out together at morning and evening twilights, working for the same ends under the same master, their close relations as fellow-beings and co-laborers are half forgotten through the instinct of command on the one side and the habit of trained obedience on the other.

No wonder, then, that while freely initiated

into all the processes of planting, the prettiest thing I have seen to-day is the open-mouthed delight of a ragged urchin who sat proudly astride of the biggest horse and rode before the plow.

May Fifteenth.

AFTER all, I believe I might better have given up my turkey to the doubtful tenderness of her possibly unnatural protectors than to have abandoned her to the ravenous cruelty of her natural enemies! Such, at least, was the thought that came over me with a shudder that was half of pity and half of fear, when going out to visit the quiet sitter in the borders of the forest, I came suddenly upon an empty nest, and a scattering heap of dusky feathers to tell the tale.

Who that overlooked, in the freshness and ardor of youthful nature-worship, the dangers of dampness, the obvious discomfort of wind and wet, could possibly have foreseen a forest tragedy, in which the handsome cat-eyed lynx,

seen leaping from rock to rock among the scrub oaks, was to play an active part! And who would connect that gentle, timid mother with a midnight scene of slaughter and rapine, a short, unequal struggle for life and death!

Yet so it is, and life is inexorable to them as well as to us,—inexorable, indeed, to all God's creatures of every degree, both preying and preyed upon. Let us guard their lives with jealous care in so far as they touch upon our own, but let us not forget that the balance of power is in other hands than ours.

May Eighteenth.

I lie along the orchard rows,
  Beneath a 'broidered canopy;
  The dusk-winged thrush flits silent by,
  And soft against a pure blue sky
The blossomed branches meet and close.

By rude or wanton winds laid bare
  The headlong petals fall apart;
  And shut pink buds begin to start
  When, rifling each a virgin heart,
The bees their stolen favors wear.

O rapturous eagerness of May !
O most intoxicating bliss !
How should we know or stop for this ;
What joys in after-life we miss,
In youth we spend or throw away !

One might well be pardoned for thinking that it were impossible to say anything new about the blossoming of uncounted orchards; yet is not our enjoyment of them tender and full as ever, and stirred with all the intimate perfume of five, or ten, or fifty years ago?

Foremost and fairest of all come the enchanting apple-blossoms, with their fluctuant curves, their alternating flush and pallor; then the white storm of laden cherry-trees, the pure, cold simplicity of the stately pear, and the hotly-crimsoned cheek of the rash and impetuous peach!

Gazing up into the exquisitely pure and tender sky, behind an overhanging cloud of blossoms, heavy with sweet odors, who would not divine the hush and mystery of summer days, "that scarce dare breathe, they are so beautiful!" And while we are wrapt in this

delicious, dreamy repose, we question idly of unimagined splendors, and give ourselves up to the luxury of wondering whether long vistas of never-ceasing bloom, or orchards mixed along the open way with grassy fields and green stretches of woodland, make the perfect paradise.

But even in waking dreams how could one who loves fruit blossoms choose other than the truth, or doubt and deny the soft halo of promise wherein rests their chiefest charm? For present pleasures are many compared with future gains; the one is nothing without the knowledge of the other, and the other without the perfume of the one is vain. Such are some of the graver musings of a day in apple-blossom time.

May Twenty-first.

WHY is it that a picnic is always considered, with us, at least, as the crowning festivity of the farmer's holiday? Is it not, above all, as a fit and pleasant reminder that his work is to feed

the world, and as steward of God's bounty, freely to dispense His blessings? And has not our chosen spot on the tender and elastic turf, at the foot of a plowed field, or beneath the light-springing foliage of a stately elm, as grand a beauty and as rich a significance as a perch on some rocky eyrie miles away?

Such, at least, is the faith in which we inaugurated to-day the picnic season, taking, as usual, a basket of plain but generous fare, and walking or riding to the grove of magnificent trees at the head of a wild ravine, whence bubbles up a spring of the purest water.

Placing a flask of coffee in the cold stream, we made some lemonade, and spread a crimson cloth beneath an oak, scattering plates and spoons broadcast, and setting out our jellied chicken, our hard-boiled eggs, buttered biscuit, sponge cake, and preserved strawberries. But before sitting down to this home-made repast, which borrowed from its surroundings a certain wild flavor of unaccustomedness, we broke up into twos and threes for rambles in the woods

and races down the hill, flower hunts in the meadow, and most harmless of bird's-nesting by the brook. And then, after picnicing gaily on the grass, in the full enjoyment of sharp appetites and simple tastes, we read and talked pleasantly for an hour or two,—a programme often varied with recitations, or out-door games, or other impromptu arrangements more or less unique and startling.

Of course, the record of one such day is trifling enough, but the plan of such a summer series of home picnics, and the home life which makes such a plan possible, have surely a very real interest and an almost universal application.

May Twenty-fifth.

THE subject of country road-making is one demanding timely notice and special mention, so it is but natural that after bumping over the sods and scraping over the gravel for a fortnight or more, I confide to my journal a few of its disagreeables and manifold uncertainties.

When the ringing shouts of boys and men resound on the wintry morning air, and with oxen and snow-plow and shovels the untrodden paths are beaten down, we do not complain of the slowness or slovenliness of the work; but now that the alternate freezing and thawing are over and the ground fairly "settled," we do not like to see the smooth, green roadsides defaced by tearing up the turf, disturbing the fresh mould, and leaving painful disfigurement in place of fresh-springing loveliness. Still more intolerant are we of the narrow and uneven highways, sloping abruptly to either side, and jolting violently at every step; for, to most of us, the comfort of our drives depends quite as much upon ease of motion as agreeableness of surroundings! Dust and mud are comparatively unknown on our mountain roads; snow, if sometimes uncomfortably deep and drifted, has at least a dazzling whiteness; but for several weeks at this season the "mending" of the roads seems rather a wholesale destruction of both comfort and beauty.

May Twenty-eighth.

NOTWITHSTANDING these and similiar obstacles, there is much more to be said on the subject of drives,—such drives as people take who live nine miles from a lemon, and as we are now taking almost every day. After studying, bit by bit, the commonplace details of farm life, it gives one a fresh sense of their larger application, to seize, in passing, the obvious result of other men's study. And for him who takes notes and draws inferences, there is more than appears in a test of this kind; for he is fortunate indeed to whom the experience of others is only less valuable than his own. With a man of this stamp for a companion, I can readily lend myself to his views, and resolve the broad, rich country-side to its inherent elements of power and fertility. Here is tilled ground, here excellent timber; there mulleined pastures and ledges of rock. And while discriminating thus, I feel that the man who figured in an ancient tale with a somewhat obtrusive moral

as seeing only timber in a magnificent forest is fully justified by the workings of his own mind, for it is in material gifts and obvious uses that the foundations of the world are laid.

Again, when listening to another, the artistic temperament reasserts itself. The uplands swell with gushing grass or springing grain, and from the floating, curling clusters of the wild grape, like foam-crests on the forest edges, an exquisite aroma fills the air. About the dwellings of the scattered farmer-folk I see no longer the unmistakable signs of thrift and unthrift, but only a rude attractiveness, a negligent grace. I look at fences and barns and irregular plowed fields with a sense of jarred surprise, and turn with pleasure to the wild, uncultivable hill-country.

Yet it is a good thing to widen one's horizon a little; there is rest and refreshment in either of two such contradictory but not irreconcilable moods; it is even possible to forget all mere suggestion and comparison, and to feel only that Divine urgency which presses under-

neath the hasty exactions of the moment, and lifts them as a tree-germ lifts an accidental weight.

May Thirty-first.

IT is long since the soft continuous dropping of an April rain, and no shower has cooled the heated palms of Spring, till leaf and flower are beginning to droop in her feverish grasp. The valleys have been gasping for a fortnight with dust and drought, and even on the cool, shadowy mountain-side the springs are drying up in the parched ground, the snakes come out to bask on the burning rocks, and the woods are stricken suddenly with the seemingly hectic flush of pink azaleas.

But louder than the plaint of the phœbe, whose brook has shrunken below the bridge to green slime and pools of stagnant water, more importunate than the mute imploring of the white starflower, hourly perishing of thirst, is the muttered discontent of an anxious household, to whom the selfish cares of each are of paramount importance.

The farmer looks from the sky to his potatoes, and back to the relentlessly blue sky again; his wife mourns over the flower-seeds which refuse to germinate, and the plants not yet transplanted; while the children push back the damp curls from their heated foreheads and wish it would rain and water the strawberry-bed.

But even while I write great banks of cloud with ragged edges are tumbling out of the west, and the north is faintly illumined by pale flashes of distant lightning.

We leave our books and work or hurry through our tea to gather in eager groups on porch and piazza, discussing weather probabilities with absorbed faces; while inky clouds rolling up white on the under side and lurid clouds with brassy edges close and scatter in every direction, advancing and retreating with the ominous roll of thunder. Finally, after all hopes are baffled and subdued by these strange tactics, a transparent fold of purest gray sweeps over the blue hills, and veils with sheeted rain the broad dark mountain-side.

There is a sudden scattering in the woods and among the dry leaves; and a stir not unlike it in our quiet door-yard, where Mary flies out on some sudden errand with wind-blown dress and hair, and the little ones flutter about like distracted chickens.

To the watchers on the piazza there comes a zig-zag streak of lightning, burning and blinding, almost simultaneously with a rush of big drops, and grinding, tearing thunder. The remainder of the storm must be watched from the safe screen of window or door; and a glorious storm it is, with a strange sense of effort in it, too, and a world of contradictory splendors, even to the pale-green sunset light and the soft unearthly glow beyond the clear horizon line. After this wild, beautiful outburst is over, there comes a strange sense of relief, —strange as the supernatural stillness and the almost metallic green of grass and leaves, and to-morrow the hot humid morning will stimulate anew the rapid growth in field and garden, in leafy wood and teeming meadow.

JUNE.

June Third.

THERE is no doubt that human nature is human nature the world over, and to a sympathetic observer there is a great deal to interest and absorb, even among the "farm hands."

A "practical" man may see in them only the imperfect instruments of his will; a dreamer may look at the varying possibilities of picturesque treatment; but one who lays hold on the true realities of life soon learns to enter in a measure into theirs. For the lives of these men, it must be remembered, do not differ so essentially from our own; to them the complex problems with which we have to deal are presented over again in a ruder and more primitive

form. Of course it is impossible, in the informality of a journal, to do more than hint at the bold strokes and imminent dangers which follow in the train of circumstance; yet a stranger who is also a friend may become acquainted in a day with sufficient raw material for more than a day's record.

Men carry the clue to their lives in their faces, to begin with, and the simpler the life-lesson the sooner we read it here. Occasionally a countenance is seen whose every feature is simply grotesque. The small, twinkling, crafty eyes, the long, hooked nose, the mouth with its disgusting leer; here is only a hideous caricature of a man. And the impression is at once confirmed by the slouching gait, the manner, at once obsequious and self-asserting, indicating a broad farce of mental capacity and an utterly distorted and degraded moral nature. A type equally mischievous, if less revolting, is that of the sharp-eyed, keen-witted, thoroughly bad and reckless man, with the look and disposition of a very fiend, thieving hands, and a lying tongue.

But how much oftener we meet with some quiet, hard-working fellow, honestly ashamed of his bad "bringing up" and consequent bad behavior; or manly, straightforward boy, ambitious of knowledge and power, whose roving disposition and ungovernable temper are continually leading him astray. Then there is the crippled lad, chief among whose simple, girlish tastes is a passionate love of flowers; and the man of fifty, of those whom the Germans call "innocent," with whose ungainly figure and gruff voice go the honest blue eyes of a child, their dumb, pathetic language outweighing all poverty of nature and taint of blood.

Looking at these men with quick understanding as well as keen insight, exchanging with them the few simple and kindly words which occasion may demand or opportunity allow, the pure-minded and disinterested observer may well come nearer to their truest and best selves than the mere employer, however kind and considerate, with whom the servant is necessarily placed before the man.

And when, as not infrequently happens, the members of a household are surprised and touched by a story of manly courage or unselfish devotion on the part of one whom they have not been slow to condemn, the words of the sage may well be remembered, that he whose sympathy goes lowest is the one from whom kings have the most to fear.

June Seventh.

WITH all who acknowledge the farmer's vocation to feed and clothe and warm mankind, the home is the true and only centre of his far-reaching industries, and the workers within bear the closest relations to those without. The maids, it is certain, are nothing inferior to the men in local coloring of speech and manner, or in striking developments of character; and as to their share of the world's work, I cannot help thinking it a mistake to leave it almost wholly in-doors.

That some of them are able and willing to do more I know from one who is not herself

a bad type of her class of New England girls —hardy, intelligent, quick and deft of eye and hand. She likes a man's work best, she says, and tells me how she cultivated a patch of potatoes one year, plowing, hoeing, all with her own hands, and did not find it harder than washing, ironing, sweeping, bread-making and such-like feminine accomplishments. Much farm-work is, of course, far lighter than this, and with its immense advantages over housework of light and air and space and, even in hot weather, a more healthful and evenly-distributed temperature, with its comparative freedom from wearing strain of body or mind, this field ought surely to be open to women of our day and generation.

More than this: it seems to me that we owe it to these country girls and boys to train them in our service, and, if possible, to employ the raw material all about us, both out-doors and in, encouraging native talent of whatever sort, discouraging all evil ways, and seeking to teach the best methods in everything. Of

course, in many cases there will be partial failure; in some the love of excitement or of drink will be unsubdued at last; some, through mere idleness and incompetence, will drop away; but patience, energy and kindliness must, after all, be crowned with some measure of success.

So true it is that from character-study of any earnest sort, there grows up a live human interest, and a strong impulse to help and comfort our fellow-creatures with that best of aid which is based on a sympathetic understanding of their wants and a wide knowledge of human nature.

June Ninth.

IT is not everybody—no, not even in the country—who is up early enough to enjoy the morning milking, with its fine accompaniment of bird-solo and chorus; its warm, new sense of the purity and refreshment of the night. But the coming home of the cows at evening, the sweet jangle of cow-bells, and the

slow saunter up the long meadow and down the road is a treat more to our liking, so that to-night we followed our pets to the barn-yard gate, and stroking the white star on Daisy's forehead, saw the equally gentle milker (man, not maid, alas!) "drum in the pail with the flashing streams." Then we went round to the kitchen door to get a draught of the new milk, willingly shared with pretty Puss, who rubbed and purred against our ankles; and when the brimming pailful was strained and put away, we lingered still about the clean, sweet-smelling dairy, to follow on in imagination the pleasant processes of butter-making. How often had we seen the "wrinkled skins" of thick golden cream removed by a practised hand and emptied from the jar into the churn in the cool of the early morning; or the slow crank turned with a measured sound to the words of the old song, "Come, butter, come!" And, as likely as not, a veritable "Peter" stood "waiting for buttermilk" at the gate.

But how soon the tiny globules began to separate and the butter to harden, dashed with buckets full of fresh cold water from the well, and skilfully manipulated into a waxy yellow mass, with the proper proportion of fine salt! Musing thus, we turned to the broad shelf close by, where lay a firm smooth roll, with all the appetizing savor of succulent June grass, and the delicacy of red clover; while the pig's pail of "loppered" milk outside looked smooth and palatable, and with the round white balls of curd in the chicken-dish insured a liberal supply of creature comforts at the "second table" of farm servants and dependants.

June Twelfth.

DEAR to the heart of every farmer's boy or girl, if not absolutely important to the economy of the farm, is the pretty brown partridge, the wild hen of the woods. "He saw the partridge drum in the woods" is one of the tests which Emerson applies to the true forest

seer; and who that visits their haunts in the mating season has not heard that peculiar resonant sound, and tracked it vainly through the echoing mazes of the hills? Vainly, at least, I imagine, for I myself have never succeeded, and the closest observer of wild life that I know has described to me his one experience of the kind.

Later come the small and deftly hidden nests, hollowed out of the soft forest mold like a turkey's, and lined with leaves and feathers; and then the round white eggs, in number usually twelve or more. These are not infrequently found here, and I confess to having once tried the oft-repeated experiment of setting the eggs under a hen—and failed, of course. The cunningest thing I have heard of in that line, however, was the work of an enterprising youth who replaced the stolen treasures with as many bantam's eggs. The mother hen soon lost her baby-birds, but the partridge led off a brood of tiny chicks and was never heard of more!

Now it is that stray frequenters of forest paths, where the laurel lifts its regal head and the ground is covered with luxuriant growths of leaf and flower and fern, may startle unawares a timid yet imperious little mother, who flies at the intruder with outstretched wings, ruffling and clucking, then hurriedly retreats again; while the half-grown children cling motionless to the ground in obedience to her well-known notes of danger.

Prettier even than these are the newly-hatched birds of a day or two old, in the softest of wood-browns, with limpid hazel eyes. And yet we, who pretend to be shocked at the hardihood of the sturdy wood-chopper who took home a hatful of partridge eggs for supper, and found them delicious, make an end of all this beauty and wildness in the interest of the sportsman's gun and the farm-boy's snare!

June Fourteenth.

Striving for a bare subsistence, or by service or command,
Lo! a Power beyond our working takes the tools from either hand;

Music hid in nests of sparrows, grasses tipped with purple bloom,
Whisper of the joys of waiting, and the sure rewards to come!

In the meadow king-cups glisten; headlong daisies nod reply;
Clovers warm and trembling hare-bells 'change a greeting swift and shy;
Milk-white moths go stumbling blindly through the foam upon its brim;
Swallows dip in magic circles, bounded by its silver rim.

In the pasture burnished beetles, clad in armor, meet and pass;
Berries redden, coyly hiding in the short and tangled grass;
There a nest of woven fibers and four freckled eggs I found,
Dashed to bits one frail thing, slipping thro' my fingers to the ground.

In the field the winds of heaven, on their broad wings gliding by,
Flash in rippled gleams and shadows through the tall and bearded rye;
And bright blades of emerald, pushing from their rustling sheaths again,
All their hilts set thick with diamonds, drink the sunlight and the rain.

Striving for a bare subsistence, or by service or command,
Lo! a Power beyond our working takes the tools from either hand;
Music hid in nests of sparrows, grasses tipped with purple bloom,
Whisper of the joys of waiting, and the sure rewards to come!

June Seventeenth.

THE trimming and clearing up of forests for convenience or "looks" is to my mind wanton cruelty—so much so that the same wood felled to the ground is in truth less painful to me.

That varied and beautiful undergrowth peculiar to the temperate zone, rounding out the retiring ranks of tree-stems with clumps of dogwood and azalea, how is it possible to see it destroyed without a pang? That is gratuitous insult, but the wood-chopper's trade is quite another thing—destruction, it is true, but honest and outright at least.

In the short sunny afternoons of winter, when the snow lay not too deep, it was not unusual for us to hear from some lonely clearing

> "The foolish screaming of the jay,
> The chopper's axe-stroke far away."

And now great brush heaps and scarred alder stumps and half-piled wood, with here

and there a dark, perfect cone in sharp relief against the dun hillside, are all that remain.

The men are busy there still, however, for the burning of the charcoal is near at hand, and a single day with hammer and nails will suffice to put up the rude framework of their hut, where they cook by day and sleep by night in the smoke of the pits. A strange, wild life is the collier's, exciting at times, and even perilous, when a pit "blows out" with a loud explosion, scattering firebrands far and near, or the treacherous crust gives way beneath their feet. But some evening soon I must pay them a visit and see for myself.

June Nineteenth.

AFTER all the blame and ridicule which the "fishing farmer" has not unjustly received, I may be wrong in giving him a place in my record of farm events; but it is certainly hard to find fault with one who lives on the borders of the clearest and wildest of trout streams, if he is occasionally caught dropping a line into

its brown still pools and brawling eddies. For the lonely pleasure and excitement of trouting, as every true fisherman knows, lies quite as much in the border tangle of leaf and flower, the carol of the thrush, and the shy, perplexing movements of the oven bird, as in the hidden beauties whose speckled sides gleam through the silvery current.

We have one or two famous fishermen in our neighborhood—of the kind that are born, not made; without costly equipment, but often with a string of fish "as long as your arm." One of these brought us, years ago, a magnificent trout,—I will not pretend to say how much it weighed, but it was a trophy to be displayed before the envious and admiring eyes of a rustic crowd. In the midst of our appreciation of this prize (possibly heightened by the fact that we had company to dinner), we saw, with what speechless horror, that the man, neither uncivilized enough to leave it in a state of nature, nor civilized enough to dress it intelligently, had cut off its head!

"Where is the head?" was demanded in tragic tones.

"I—I don't know, ma'am," was the startled reply.

"Well, go and find it, if it's a possible thing!" and the poor man, astonished beyond measure, complied and soon returned with the head, which was sewn on and borne in triumph to the table, to be duly admired and wondered at by a roomful of unsuspecting guests.

But a fish of that size is more to be looked at than eaten, any day; and what could be better for a June breakfast or supper than a relish of small trout, crisp and dainty, and exquisite in flavor? And who but the farmer, who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, has a natural and inalienable right to those delicate wild mouthfuls of fruit and game, which are always to be had for the taking?

June Twenty-second.

"When the forest shall mislead me,
When the night and morning lie.
When sea and land refuse to feed me,
'Twill be time enough to die."—[EMERSON.

THERE is no little difference of opinion among lovers of out-of-door life as to whether such life is more fully enjoyed with or without a personal motive, apart from the mere purpose of enjoyment. For my own part, I find that that delicious sense of abandon which most of us court comes oftenest unsought, and in the way of some thoroughly congenial occupation.

I wish it were possible to write the record of that never-to-be-forgotten June day when three of us rose at daylight, and trailing through the long grass heavy with dew, across the brook and up the rocky road, came out upon the steep slope of that mountain pasture where the strawberries hung ripe and tempting among their three-cleft crimson leaves. The air was filled with the sweet clangor of birds, the daisies hung their heads above the damp, chilly ground; but steadily we picked through the morning twilight till the sky grew beautiful with sunrise, and the long, slanting rays revived our drooping spirits. Drenched to the

waist with dew we grouped ourselves below the meadow bars and soon grew warm and dry, while all sense of ache or weariness gave place to a delicious glow and tingle in every limb. There on the short grass, basking in the sun, we ate a breakfast of bread and fruit moistened with clear, cool water from the brook; then, rested and refreshed, went on to fill our pails, pick flowers and chase butterflies, or paddle in the water and creep barefooted over the stones till noon.

But this is only one of many long mornings and afternoons given each year to this delightful labor, which is also freshest pastime; and its many phases of vigorous and healthful enjoyment must be known to be appreciated. Our "bonny Kate" whinnies low and tosses her chestnut mane on the outskirts of the pasture, or gallops playfully about her pretty colt, caressing and chiding it by turns. Her well-formed limbs are round and handsome now, and her smooth coat shines like satin. At the low, tangled border of the alder lot appears

the graceful head of Buttercup or Daisy, and catching up an empty pail we take from the gentle creature, who munches unconcernedly on, a warm, refreshing draught.

Then there is sociable chatter and fun going on between the pickers, who creep about on hands and knees, spying out the dewy scarlet berries, and those others with head bent, stained lap, and rosy-tipped fingers, who part from each its tiny green hull, and enjoy to the full their tantalizing odor. And there is pleasure of still another sort in looking up the broad slope opposite, crowned with a low brown cottage embowered in trees; in seeing the men at work in the neighboring fields, and hearing their ringing shouts made musical by the distance.

With work like this one easily forgets, you say, a true and just adaptation of means to end; but we shall count you answered unless you care to refuse the delicious portion set apart for tea, and to sneer at warmth and summer fragrance sealed up in glass jars for the bleak December weather.

June Twenty-fourth.

WHILE looking over the seedsmen's catalogues this season (a pastime, by the way, in which I only indulge under protest, but which some people find wonderfully absorbing), I hardly knew whether to be glad or sorry at the large number of wild flowers whose names appeared, usually marked by the most patronizing kindness, which read absurdly enough, to be sure, but from a florist was quite a condescension, I suppose.

On the one hand, one hates to see the snowy bloodroot and the delicate vernal blossom of the spring beauty, the shy and stately moccasin flower, and the many-colored beauty of the asters, translated into Latin polysyllables and paraded among cobeas and nolanas and thunbergias, with a price affixed to each.

But then, on the other, it is good to know that our native blossoms are gaining wider appreciation, and we can but hope that people will find a better way than to range them

stiffly and painfully in beds and flower-borders, choosing rather to study them with patience and humility in their own wild haunts. For if half the time given to experimenting with brilliant and tender exotics, which were never meant to grow in our cold climate, were spent more wisely in making the acquaintance of our neighbors and kinsfolk, and encouraging them, so far as possible, on our own domain, the result would be of value to many.

The present method of gardening reminds one of a child's pebble-marked boundaries and twig plantations, so trifling is it and so inconsequent; and most of our gardens, indeed, are a very indifferent substitute for the green velvet turf which they displace on our lawns and pleasure grounds.

June Twenty-sixth.

TALKING of gardens, I am tempted to write down a conversation which occupied, in fact, my morning thoughts, while leaning from my window before the bell rang, and listening to that

"Sound to rout the brood of cares,
The sweep of scythes in morning dew!"

It was something like this:

I (contemplatively).—Well, it is certainly fortunate for those among us who have eyes and ears that the scythe is not allowed to rust on the bough, but retains in our door-yards the post of honor, as forerunner of the mowing-machines,—

"To show that costly summer is at hand!"

Myself (aggressively).—Yes, you are always sentimentalizing about the "environment;" you object to front gates, lawns and shrubbery, while, for my part, I dislike a rough, unkempt turf, and prefer garden-rollers and lawn-mowers. Look at those girls who rose at five, tucked up their dresses, and went down on hands and knees in the damp grass; they are coming in now to wash their hands after weeding half round the beds before breakfast. Now, that's what I call pluck!

I.—Yes, I do object to a stiff and artificial

arrangement of grounds; to my mind the unmistakable signs of human habitation should melt into the landscape by imperceptible degrees. And as to weeds—

Myself.—As to weeds, I suppose you will say that there is no such thing; that one green thing is as good as another. If you would only acknowledge some principle of selection!

I.—Your theory is, at all events, as true of plants as it is of men; but people are apt, in both cases, to make a distinction without a difference. By pulling up one thing and putting in another, you make an attempt to vindicate your own taste; but I will say that such taste is, in all probability, a false one.

At this point the bell rings, and conversation is dropped.

June Thirtieth.

"A swarm of bees in May
Is worth a load of hay;
A swarm of bees in June
Is worth a silver spoon."

—[Old Proverb.]

OUR quiet household, with its steady corps of workers within and without, has been greatly demoralized this morning by a new and pleasant excitement which I hasten to relate in the vivid and fragmentary manner in which it has just flashed through my brain.

First of all, then, comes papa from his peaceful occupation of hoeing, and, as if seized with temporary insanity, drums wildly with the unoffending instrument of his labor on a tin pan. Loud shouts follow, and frantic performances on a dinner horn, till, rushing to the door in bewilderment and alarm, a strange sight meets our eyes. A cloud of bees drifts slowly to the south, greeted rather too officiously, perhaps, by all this noise of welcome and these shovelfuls of earth flung high into the air by half a dozen men.

It is not long till pursued and pursuers disappear below the hill, and five minutes later the good news comes with a returning scout that the bees have settled. That live black cluster on the overhanging branch of a lofty

maple, in shape like a gigantic pear, we find to be already the focus of an admiring group, which has also a rough picturesqueness of its own. Five or six bronzed and bearded men "stand around" in the road or lounge about the stone wall, staring up into the tree with loudly-expressed interest, while at a little distance stand the women; one with a rather pretty, bold face, round blue eyes, and clustering rings of light brown hair, one smaller and more childish-looking, but dull and stolid in demeanor, and another with peering eyes and sharp, old-looking features behind a green Shaker bonnet,—all three surrounded by a yelping cur and some dirty bare-foot children.

In agreement with the homely, practical wisdom of the men, who appear at their best in an emergency like the present, a hive is brought (rubbed out with apple-leaves), a white cloth spread, a saw produced, and one of their number proceeds to sever the limb. Soon a loud crackling is heard, a noise, and a running to and fro, and the great bough gives way; but

with a mighty subdued sound of humming the bees rise up again, and circling through the air in a seemingly inextricable tangle, pitch at last upon a still higher and more perilously slender branch. Clambering fearlessly up to the very top of the tree, an agile lad leans forward on the heavily laden bough and breaks off the bending twig with its precious freight. Let down from hand to hand and limb to limb, breathlessly followed by many eager eyes, it reaches the ground in safety, and is placed beneath the hive! Then what a shout of exultation goes up, and what a buzz of excitement follows, during which we slip quietly away, feeling more than rewarded for our somewhat erratic attempts at bee-keeping by the fresh and unexpected pleasure in this pretty rural scene of hiving the bees.

JULY.

July Second.

IN the breezy summer mornings, when a myriad of green leaves stir softly on richly canopied boughs, and the meadows are crisp with nodding-fruited grasses, and all in their glistening prime, a not unpleasing accompaniment to the twitter of birds and the boom of insects is the musical hum of the mowing machine. Shading my eyes with one hand, I look across at the clumsy-wheeled vehicle, with a steady pair of sober old horses, and a man perched jauntily atop, catching now and then the steely glitter of saw-toothed knives, and hearkening to the loud continuous drone of smooth-running machinery.

But few of us are satisfied with looking, and

however picturesque the scene from vine-shaded lattice and marble threshold, the hay-field is itself a lovelier trysting-place. Following in the wake of the team along the fresh-cut swathe, we stoop to gather up a handful of the dainty field flowers, too willingly let die. This pale lobelia, with its slender loose spike of delicate blue; the darker and denser purple of this rough-leaved heal-all; these daisies, audacious, yet fine and tremulous as well, and these brown papery heads of yellow clover! How subtly charming their natural mingling with airy purplish panicles of grass, and how soon, alas! the modest and attractive garland, "so light, so cool with dew," wilts in the direct rays of the noonday sun!

Along the hedges a fringe of ferns sets off the delicate rose of dogbane, and the creamy white of the broad-bosomed elder; while raspberries hang their tempting clusters on many a leafy spray, and for the venturesome palate there are drooping stems of dark astringent choke-cherries to be had for the tasting. Or

when the creaking hay-rake, like a huge spider, tilts up and down the field, we fall at length on the long windrow, a warm, luxurious cushion along the dry stubble, and lie with eyes closed and hats pulled down upon our foreheads, inhaling the fine scent of new-mown hay, and basking in the afternoon sun.

July Fifth.

THERE is surely a delicious something which is both rest and freedom in the very blissful abandon so faintly shadowed forth above; yet after two days of unrestrained gypsying, one is fain to believe it only a distant prelude or soft accompaniment to the real drama whose actors move and whose scenes are shifted before our very eyes. It is well that the mechanical advances of an ingenious age have not wholly destroyed the poetry of labor, and notwithstanding a noticeable absence of hand work, together with the rude grace of rakes and scythes, the time of hay-making may perhaps present more broad and varied attractions than

any other special season. The work itself, it is said, has lost much of its early importance, while gaining wonderfully in ease and rapidity; and still there are long, hot days in the hay-field, broken only by the sound of the dinner-horn or by an occasional gulp of root beer or "sweetened water" from the covered pail in the maple shade.

The early stages of the work already hinted at are full of an indescribable freshness and charm; but with the heaping into cocks comes the heyday of the children. What merry romps are now in order, what games of "hide-and-seek," or "puss-in-the-corner," till, flushed and heated, crumpled and berry-stained, they are lifted to the top of the swaying load and borne in triumph to the mow!

Accidents, too, will happen in the hay-field, even among the four-leaf clovers, and the goldy grasses, and the pale-green katydids; dresses will get torn, and brown locks filled with hay-seed; and once a tiny pin, a grass-green beetle set in gold, was dropped on top

of a load, and, sifting through to the ground, was picked up uninjured next morning.

But the softest and most sylvan charm of all is reserved for the tender twilight, when its votaries are pillowed on yielding heaps scattered through the fragrant dusk about the meadow, when myriad fire-flies flash and tingle amid the green, and the touch of a sleeve in the dark brings a sense of nearness which months of commonplace daily contact cannot give.

July Eighth.

A PARTY of three are seated comfortably at a long table in the outer kitchen this sultry July morning, with a basketful of cherries between them, while another is hovering over the fire, with hot cheeks and purple fingers, or pouring the rich syrup over the pale, translucent globes. A pretty scene, it might be said; yet it is only an explanatory note to the charming episode of yesterday, when this same trio of girls set out over a lonely, beautiful

road, to find a hospitable farm-house, surrounded by trees whose over-arching boughs might safely be rifled of their tempting freight.

There, indeed, it lay in the boundless splendor of a perfect afternoon; on one side the comfortable, old-fashioned dwelling, with its quaint parterre of bright-hued flowers and rows of brown bee-hives; on the other, the outlying barns and stables, while beyond and behind them stretched the steep and winding road, lined with daisies and thistles and black-cap raspberries, and irregularly bordered by a magnificent spreading cherry-tree in every bit of ruined wall and overgrown fence-corner. Against more than one of these was placed a ladder, and eager eyes gazed up through the interwoven branches where hung the smooth and polished spheres, white and scarlet and purple, amid their pointed green and shining leaves.

Then sure feet touched the rounds and stepped from swaying limb to limb, and girls with parted lips and laughing eyes went singing up

and down ; now standing on tiptoe and clinging by one hand to the interlacing boughs, now seated in a crotch of the tree and reaching above and below with pliant wrists and slender fingers. No wonder that the baskets, swung here and there, were rapidly filled by practised hands, while one, less bold or less skilful than the others, remained seated on the topmost round of the ladder, and, having stripped the lowest branches and tasted of their purple store, took in the pretty moving picture in the tree and the sound of ringing voices, with true Bohemian pleasure.

And later, when the active limbs grew weary and the pickers descended, heaped baskets, crowned with full and perfect clusters, were hung on either arm and lifted to the back of the wagon, together with massive piles of creamy chestnut blossoms above their pyramids of leaves. Was ever draught so welcome as that from the old-fashioned pump in the yard, which overflowed its battered tin cup and splashed over dress and ankles ; or better still,

the refreshing glimpses of quaint humor and homely New England character in the pithy sayings and kindly, rugged faces of our sometime entertainers?

Then, too, the long drive homeward was fresh and wild enough, with frequent stoppages by the roadside for wished-for handfuls of flowers and berries, with sudden raids on neighboring woods and meadows, and even a madcap ride on the harnessed back of our patient Dobbin, with one hand tightened in the bridle and one foot resting on the shaft. And, sweetest of all, at the close of a day like this, the frugal yet sufficient repast of bread and milk and fruit, the delicious weariness that insures a no less delicious repose, and the swift, unconscious sinking to a light and dreamless slumber.

July Tenth.

ONE of the brightest and prettiest transformation scenes of the hay-making season is that which comes out in life-like colors under the threatening skies of a warm July day.

Early in the afternoon there are "thunder heads" to be seen above the far horizon,—volcanic heaps of bright white cloud in a dazzlingly blue sky; but several hours of sunshine intervene before a gathering sweep of blackness frowns ominous behind the nearer mountains, and low, indistinct mutterings portend a coming storm. Then the light, loose-jointed hay-wagon is brought out, and other work, of whatever sort, is suspended, while all hands huddle into cocks the half-cured hay, and tumble all that will possibly do upon the rack, so that load after load goes staggering up the hill and into the barn. In such hurried movements as these before a storm, it may be that some luckless wight has stabbed his hand with a hay-fork; or a load has been heedlessly upset, perhaps, in turning a sharp corner, burying one or more in its fall, and increasing tenfold the scramble and confusion.

But sooner or later there comes a crash, the rain descends in sheeted silver, and the unwilling oxen are goaded into a run, till laughing,

shouting, singing, men and teams are all under shelter, and whether the choicest clover-hay be out or in, the uncaring storm sweeps by.

July Twelfth.

The day is hot and still and dry ;
The sun beats down with blinding glare
On visible white waves of air.

The bright reluctant stream curves by,
Between broad banks with green o'erlaid,
And round-topped willows' sultry shade.

For this the mower left his swathe,
And stretched his tired limbs and quaffed
A warm and unrefreshing draught.

Here children knelt beside the pool,
And the bright water, unaware,
Streamed from their long and shining hair.

The traveller caught with feverish haste
Those lifeless drops the stagnant spring
Unto his burning palm could bring.

Pity our soul's consuming pain,
O guardian of these streams accurst,
And brew a cup to quench this thirst !

She cast us one reviving look,—
Then, as she secret virtues knew
In every tree or flower that grew,

Sought first the rough and sterile soil,
Which only stubborn growth allows,
And broke the spruce and hemlock boughs.

By roadsides ankle-deep in dust,
She strove to mingle in her search
The sassafras and slender birch.

She stooped to pull the yellow dock,
Whose root a wholesome bitter knew,
And tonic dandelion too;

Or, daintier grown, essayed to find
Wild ginger, Cicely's flowering strings,
And twenty sweet and spicy things.

The roots she cut, the bark she stripped,
The leaves and stems by handfuls took,
And washed them in the running brook.

Then left to steep in water clear,
On a slow fire they simmered long,
And made the liquor black and strong.

Sweetened and spiced, with little more
Save water added (and a soul!),
An earthen jar received the whole.

One day and night, in hidden cells
Her secret processes went on;
Till, the slight fermentation done,

The offered cup had touched our lips,—
A green-tinged liquor, sparkling clear,
A cooling draught of forest beer!

July Thirteenth.

A FIELD of ripened, sun-steeped grain, with the grass-green and the sky-blue all about it, and an indigo-bird perched on a bending ear, his glossy plumage and elegance of form enhancing the most exquisite of accidental contrasts!

And again, the same rye evenly cut in long, full sweeps, and the reapers advancing in perfect time to a slow-rounded rhythm of voluptuous ease,—or so it appears to the simply passive beholder. For always in observing the firm supple action of well-made limbs, there is apparent a sort of luxury of motion, which can only be explained by the actual luxury attending the trained exercise of bodily powers.

But how can I look at this long as picture or pastime, how keep myself from trying to realize how much it means to them! There is something suggestive, to begin with, in the evident and striking contrast between the rude,

awkward, shambling lad, and the man who is master of himself and all that he undertakes. Now that I think of it, I cannot but feel my own inferiority, and so suddenly recall the almost pathetic earnestness of the little girl whom I overheard saying to her baby brother: "You're a *man*, *I'm* only a girl!"

July Sixteenth.

WHEN the last load of hay has creaked and rumbled on the barn floor, when the horses have long since been ridden to water and turned out to grass, when the men have gone singing down from their work, and a long, low whistle, gurgling and musical as the unwritten notes of birds, rises above the sound of departing footsteps, then, if ever, may we turn from the well-earned rest of the farmer to the collier keeping his lonely vigil beneath the summer stars.

Last night the unraked hay lay damp with dew about our ankles, and tripped us now and again in its fragrant meshes; the shivering al-

ders, huddled in the blackness, touched with wan lips the sunless water; and crossing one by one its rocky shallows we kept toward the the little cluster of pits against the side of the mountain. Over them hung a cloud of smoke which obscured the stars and swathed the opaque cold moon in bluish vapor, and the fumes of burning charcoal, strongest and subtlest of pungent woodland odors, rose to our nostrils with overpowering force. Groping about in the shadowy light, we stumbled first upon a burnt-out pit, coated with fine gray ashes, and bordered with rakings from the lower stratum of coal. How perfectly molded the ringed wood and rough effigy of bark, and how exquisite the traces of blue-black bloom on that hard and polished surface!

Following backward, with unabated interest, the several stages of the work, we gazed in turn upon a mound of black earth lately fired, and another not yet covered. That regular, even pile, carried in straight, smooth layers to the very top pole, with glistenings of silver birch

among its small round alders, made a pleasant relief in color from the general uniformity, and, as we were not slow to discover, lay at just the right angle for a comfortable reclining-chair.

A little aside from the dense overhanging smoke, with a group of sheltering trees behind it, stood the collier's hut, a square, plain cabin of bright new boards, having a low door closed by a rude device of bended twigs, and above it a sufficient opening for the admission of air and light. The furnishings within were doubtless primitive enough—a heap of straw, a tattered blanket, a three-legged stool, perhaps; and outside a rusty little stove furnished the missing link with civilization—where an open fire-place would have been nearly as convenient and far more picturesque.

From this temporary cover came the sound of voices, one rapid and high-pitched, one gruff and slow, and with them the yelping of a mongrel cur, and frequent intervals of laughter, shrill and mirthless from one, boisterous and

hearty from the other. Questions were put and freely answered in rude vernacular and homely, striking language, which yet presumed too much on any special knowledge in the listeners; for the parlance of "the bush" is almost as puzzling to the uninitiated as sailors' jargon or artists' slang. The men, however, showed a thorough familiarity with their work, which was not unmixed with the well-earned satisfaction of an honest pride. And we were even told of one who liked the smell of smoke "better than a good dinner."

Out of the woods at last, we sauntered homeward in the white moonlight, picked the chance daisy silvered in its rays, and where the dusk meadow tossed her scented locks we held sweet converse of things far removed from the smouldering passion and stifled fear of the pits, or the rough-clad charcoal-burner's lonely hut.

July Nineteenth.

"I delve in the mountain's dark recess,
And build my fires in the wilderness;
The red rock crumbles beneath my blast,
While the tall trees tremble and stand aghast.

At midnight's hour my furnace glows,
And the liquid ore in red streams flows,
Till the mountain's heart is melted down,
And seared by fire is its sylvan crown."

J. E. Dow.

THERE are deep, long ruts in the smooth country roads, where the heavy wheels are grinding them down, and the rumbling coal wagons are almost daily encountered on lonely walks, or heard for a moment in passing, as they rattle along the level and slowly zigzag down the hills.

That hard-working team of swaying oxen or laboring horses, those huge black wagons piled with shining coal, those grimy, sooty men in red shirts and slouched hats, whose rough, bearded faces and bold or cunning eyes look strange and uncanny enough with such black surroundings, is it of them that we muse so deeply in the hemlock shade beside the spring?

Rather do we think of the fair young trees, alive and tingling with sap, which are hacked and hewn and stripped of their delicate fine spray of leaves and branches, that these lumps of black earth may go to feed the hungry fur-

naces and turn the yellow ore into bars of red-hot iron.

Not till the snow flies, they tell me, will the work of destruction be done; so that under the dewy skies of June and the frosty ones of October, in the long summer twilights and shortening autumn days, the wonderful transformation will still go on; and when that little tract is cold and bare, in acres of untouched woodland the finger of spring will create a greenness and a splendor which no mortal magic of months or weeks could render a more bewitching surprise.

July Twenty-second.

Voices of the night and day,
  Of the earth and sky,
Meet and mingle in the lay
  Which I fain would try;
Grief and gladness crossed by time
  Hold my fleeting breath
To a wordless chant sublime,
  Strong with life and death:

Hiss of tongues and whir of wings,
  Ceaseless stir and beat,
Myriad winged and creeping things
  Droning through the heat;

Chirp of crickets, hum of bees,
All the drowsy din
Rocked by winds among the trees,
Strive to enter in.

Call of birds from upper air—
Swift dissolving height—
Weighted with a dumb despair,
Winged for instant flight ;
Ah, behind that leafy screen,
One, with wounded breast,
Lingers, trembling and unseen,
By her empty nest !

Sounds of human joy or strife,
Tidal ebb and flow,
Vast unlanguaged sea of life,
Tossing to and fro ;
Voices struck in rude accord,
Pitched or low or high,
Though no whisper of a word
Reach me where I lie.

Voices of the night and day,
Of the earth and sky,
Meet and mingle in the lay
Which I fain would try ;
Grief and gladness crossed by time
Hold my fleeting breath
To a wordless chant sublime,
Strong with life and death.

July Twenty-sixth.

A FAIR example of the useful and ordinary in farming is found in the almost universal

potato crop, whose white or rosy tubers grow and ripen below the surface, and whose trim rows of bright green tops are scarcely an ornament at the best. There is much hard work in the potato field for man and beast; work, too, of a thoroughly commonplace order and quite unattractive to the looker-on, except as he is interested in each and every department of honest labor.

The quarrelling with petty nuisances is always a thankless office, and herein lies a trying and almost continual necessity of the farmer's position as master of the soil. There are bold and hardy interlopers, or rather shall we say rebellious subjects, who are continually disputing his claim, and for these there is no redress. Still it must not be forgotten that in putting them down he is in constant danger of destroying the nice balance of nature, and thereby throwing his own affairs into even more hopeless disorder.

Such difficulties as these are peculiarly marked in the case of potatoes, and they are in every respect a most exacting crop. The

soil must be loosened and mellowed about their roots, while the weeds are kept from their borders; and when it comes to the scattering of poisonous purples and metallic greens, who would not, if they could, rebel? I shall at all events refrain from describing the process!

July Twenty-eighth.

She walks between the tasselled corn,
  Whose serried ranks her fair face screen;
She greets me with a careless scorn,
  And scornful laughter rings between.

Black-haired, red-lipped, her dark, bright face
  The toy of every woman's whim;
Her form the mould of sensuous grace,
  Supple and smooth and round of limb.

And is it Summer I behold,
  A breathing splendor, stretched and warm?
Within her bosom's plenteous fold
  She thrusts a brown and shapely arm.

This harvest nymph, whose loosened braid
  Drops down a cheek of glowing tan,
Incarnate Summer is, and made
  To satisfy the heart of man.

Nay, but a simple country lass
  That dark abundant beauty wears;

Her poppied slumbers softly pass,
The ripened harvest warmth she shares.

Beside her couch the heat is sore,—
Her silken couch, with green o'erlaid;
Those glistening spears I pass before,
And leave unharmed my barefoot maid.

July Thirty-first.

"The old, swallow-haunted barns,
Brown-gabled, long, and full of seams
Through which the moted sunlight streams,
And winds blow freshly in, to shake
The red plumes of the roosted cocks
And the loose hay-mow's scented locks."

WHITTIER.

IT must not be supposed that the attendant pleasures of hay-making are quite exhausted, even when the meadows lie "shorn before their time," and the mows are darkened with odorous heaps of new-mown hay. For to all who love rambling old barns, and arrive at an easy familiarity with ladders and lofts, there is a strange, dreamy fascination in lying on a warm and scented pile, amid broad masses of light and shadow, gazing at nothing with wondering intentness.

A rustle is heard in one corner, and a mouse creeps timidly out, only to scamper along a low, broad beam in the flooring, and daintily nibble at something in all its dust and cobwebs. Swallows are cheeping and twittering everywhere; their nests, with the delicate, semi-transparent eggs, or queer, shapeless baby-birds, tufted with blackish down, cling high, cling low, to the rude, bowed cross-beams and rafters.

Or rising and stumbling through the long twilight of the mows, crossing low scaffolding of bare, loose boards, and diving into dark recesses, we are followed by the stealthy feet of the old black cat, and suddenly confronted with the green glare of her eyes. And yet again, with a half-frightened cackle, a staid brown biddy starts up in our midst, and goes fluttering and tumbling out of the window, leaving us to search at our leisure for the precious nestful so cunningly hidden and so unexpectedly discovered.

AUGUST.

August Second.

But in the silent, dreamy weather, and under the hazy August skies, when the warm gusts sweep the chestnut wood and twinkle through the birches that skirt the fields, what can be lovelier, with the soft contour and luxurious complexion of youth, than the milky bloom of the bee-laden buckwheat?

Strolling through the orchard for an apronful of scarlet windfalls, crisp and delicate, with a piquant and pleasant flavor of their own, then clambering over a stone wall overrun with blackberry vines, we broke, this noon, into half an acre of it,—the clustering pale-green stems loaded with white and pinkish blossoms, and alive with the muffled, dreamy hum of uncounted bees.

What delicious repose, what absorbing idleness, to lie thus pillowed on the lap of summer, surrounded with intoxicating color and odor, and lulled by musical monotones of sound!

Loitering with unwilling feet beside this paradise of bloom, we passed too soon its enchanted ground, and extended our purposeless yet happy wanderings to the close-shorn field above it, to the green, tangled hedge-rows and borders of woodland, painted with the low crest of budding golden-rod, the faint starry edges of early asters, and the pallid, graceful droop of blanching ferns. These, we said, shall ornament the tea-table, and the toilers of the day may surround them with their richer gains.

Thus may we close an idle hour in the month of gracious giving, with dripping combs of amber honey, alight with the warm fragrances of midsummer, with new, white milk, and luscious blackberries, and delicate, smooth rounds of cottage cheese!

August Fifth.

SITTING in the doorway these fruitful August days, and leaning heavily on one arm, with head thrown back and half-closed eyes, I hear the twitter of young birds among the maples, the cheep of swallows in the barn-loft, the "whit" of half-grown turkeys filing through the meadows in long procession, and the fluttering stir of baby chickens in the short, crisp grass. Idly I watch these midsummer broods, and dwell most fondly, as in duty bound, on the every-day tenants of the farm and recipients of its bounty, cherishing thus

> "A nature tamed,
> And grown domestic like a barn-door fowl."

The flocks of young turkeys now ranging the new-mown fields in a systematic search for grasshoppers, their slender, dark forms moving distinct and slow against the green, have certainly less of variety than their light-minded cousins, the eldest of whom are already quarrelling playfully over some choice morsel, or

fluttering their wings and trying a faint, shrill crow! Smaller and more compactly formed, the rightful children of the old hen-mother are also more domestic in their tastes, and prefer a nearer range.

But what, after all, is the care of these household pets to the tantalizing pleasure of an occasional glimpse at the interior of a bird's nest! There are doubtless half a score of these tiny centres within a stone's throw of my hand, and how interesting they are even to the chance comer, especially now that their dainty fledglings are learning to fly! Everywhere about the stone walls and on the sloping roofs we find the little trembling, palpitating creatures, and take them in our hands, perhaps, to smooth the ruffled wings or note the tender feet, curled tightly up, and the startled brown and shining eyes. Often at this season there comes a heavy storm by which many nests are blown down, and the helpless inmates perish of cold, of hunger and fright. "Mouse-trap," the frolicsome black-and-white kitten, is,

moreover, a dangerous foe, though jealously watched by the children.

Despite misfortunes such as these, there is nothing more characteristic of this golden month than the countless flocks, both wild and tame, that brood and hover beneath her sheltering wings. All the woods and fields are astir with them, and our barns and grassy roadsides overrun with the little restless, chirping things. Even for our own we need hardly do more than look on and listen, as I am doing now, so rich is the harvest of grains and grasses, and so myriad-voiced the insect life provided for their wants in that great and generous storehouse—out-of-doors!

August Seventh.

WE had quite a commotion one hot afternoon, a day or two ago, in the sudden appearance and final extinction of a rattlesnake which ventured too near our tenant house, was attacked by three women with broom, poker, axe, and literally cut in pieces, the "men-

folks" being "off at work" as is usual in case of emergency.

Of course the skin and head of the creature were conspicuously nailed to a tree; of course everybody went to look at them; of course its rattles were counted, its length was wrangled over, and of course the kitchen talk was of nothing else for days.

But the most that was brought to light by this comparatively harmless encounter was a perfect nest of snake stories, of more or less exaggerated horrors, from the bent and grizzled uncle's interminable yarns to the small boy's boastful tale of hand-to-hand struggles with "double-headed" snakes and "horned adders." There appears to be more of superstitious fear on this point than attaches to any other subject in the minds of our people. We are told some things, like the story of a second snake that always follows its dead mate, already familiar in print, and others curious enough and almost unheard of. A bit of skin from the snake on the bitten spot, is said to be a sure

cure for snake-bites; and to bite through a rattlesnake while still warm ensures sound teeth for the rest of your life.

There is also a very general impression among the boys and girls of this region that all snakes are equally deadly and terrible. "Green snakes," "stripéd snakes," "adders" and all the rest are indiscriminately feared by the latter, and persecuted by the former with sticks and stones. Perhaps there is even more genuine terror exhibited by the barefoot girl going huckleberrying, than would seem to justify the dainty shrieks of the "city boarder."

The following bit of snake-lore, which comes as near to poetic justice as we commonly get, was told me by the daughter of the chief actor, and carries probability on the face of it.

An inveterate snake-hater, like most of her class, she observed one day a long black snake on the point of swallowing a toad. Boiling over with righteous indignation she flung a stone with uncalled-for violence; but hitting it woman-fashion, succeeded only in killing the

toad, while the snake wriggled unconcernedly off! This was too much to bear, and the snake was pursued with intentions the most murderous; but when the defender of injured innocence came back hot and tired after a long and unsuccessful chase, she was, as the narrator expressed it, "never so mad in her life!"

August Tenth.

"LET us take for once," I said this morning to an imaginary listener, "let us take the place of the kitchen-maid or the boy who does the chores, and gain, if we can, a realizing sense of the beauty and fitness of the vegetable garden." So I caught up a basket that lay on the table, and pushing over her eyes a shadowy sun-bonnet, she followed me out of the back door and through a dark little alley-way lined with flaunting yellow sun-flowers.

A row of small thrifty-looking currant-bushes came first, then the strawberry and asparagus beds, whose season of usefulness was over; melon vines, with their crumpled white

and yellowish blossoms mixed with pale-green globes of fruit; squash vines, with huge golden cups among their broad green platters; ivory heads of cauliflower, and glowing, half-ripened tomatoes. White and scarlet beans on slender tripods bedecked the rustling ranks of corn, so we filled our laps with the crinkly amber silk, as our hands with the gem-like blossoms, and bit through row after row of sweet milky kernels in sportive liking for their crude vegetable taste.

In another part of the garden were bright, trim rows of winter vegetables, ruddy beet-tops with wine-hued stems, thick-leaved onions crowded with dense spikes of pretty white blossoms; and dividing these from the home potato-patch the pea-vines stretched their curling tendrils, where here and there clung a belated blossom, white or purple, on butterfly wings. A-tiptoe with eagerness we snatched the emerald cases, lined with even rows, hinged on what airy mechanism, and closing by what smooth and perfect spring! But in our

haste we must not brush with flying finger-tips this nestful of young robins, whose gaping red throats are almost in our grasp! Well, we saw much and learned more in such pleasant diversions as these, my shadowy companion and I; but our late return and half-filled baskets would hardly have been overlooked in another.

August Thirteenth.

How soon a last resort becomes a recognized necessity, and even the most trying inconvenience transforms itself into a not unpleasing part of our daily life! The drying up of wells and "never-failing" springs is already a nine days' wonder, and who looks for more than a constant trickle from the barrel of water beside the door?

Daily the rude "stone-boat," with its clumsy yoked oxen, slips on its winding track through the crisp mown fields; daily the clear brook-water is dipped from rocky pools and sunny shallows, and its bubbling laughter imprisoned in a black and soundless cistern.

But that I may better realize the potent charm of common things, let me stand in the open door-way and listen to the chatter and lisp of childish voices,—voices of the brown-haired gypsy girl and the bonny boy with shining hazel eyes. There sit the two with an arm around each other, and broad hats falling backward from merry sunburnt faces, steadying themselves by a hand on the bumping barrel that gurgles and rolls behind them, while now and again a sudden lurch sends them off in shrieks of laughter. And at their side walks the fond papa, who turns from guiding his steers to look with partial eyes and smile upon that pretty pair!

August Sixteenth.

Broad lights and shadows sweep below
  The sun-girt mountains' nearer range;
The woods their dusk, bright masses show
  Along the line of subtlest change.

The meadows, greening goldenly,
  Clothe their broad slopes in satin sheen;
With leaf-lit boughs against the sky,
  The glancing tree-tops laugh between.

To such a house, so roofed by heaven,
So walled with earth, a stately pile,
What flower-wrought tapestries are given,
What wreathéd arches, mile on mile!

The aster laughs amid the woods,
Heaps up her fringes in the sun,
And light along the dusty roads
Thistles and daisies mingling run.

The fences all are ringed with flame,
That aye ascends in yellow spires,
And in the shade the foxglove stands
And feeds afresh the forest fires.

Within four walls whose tints are dead
Beside this outer world of ours,
The blank, cold ceiling overhead,
There glows a vase of fresh-plucked flowers:

The white wood-aster's spangled train,
The everlasting's gold-tipped pearls,
Pale clovers from the wind-swept lane,
And milk-weed with its hooded curls!

Had any other dared to try,
How cold, how crude the hues combined;
They owned beneath their native sky
An eye so true, a touch so kind!

Let grassy uplands, forest-crowned,
With purples deck the border-wild;
We in our chambered cell have found
The whole creation reconciled.

August Twentieth.

ALREADY the pictured calm of closing summer is here; and with the unclouded green of earth and blue of heaven, the oat-harvest brims again with molten gold the happy valleys,

> "Widening and widening, till they fade
> In yon soft ring of summer haze."

The slumbrous August noons are full of color and movement, when the rhythmic flow of the wind is hushed by the measured sweep of cradles, and the uncut grain on the uplands falls evenly in soft, bright waves athwart the sunny field. Reclining on its borders, we follow at our ease the rapid, graceful motions of raking and binding; for pleasant and picturesque it is to see a tall lad grasp his armful and deftly twist the shining strands with wonted ease and freedom. And when at last the pure golden sheaves stand upright against the reddish bronze of the stubble, then leaning breathlessly against the massy pile, or

nestling underneath its warm and quivering shadow, how exquisite the sensation that steals under the closed eyelids and over the flushed temples, till the very finger-tips and ends of the hair begin to burn and creep!

But too soon we are roused from our sun-steeped couch by the panting of the ox-team, the creaking of the wain, and the noisy urging of the men. Each sheaf is tossed through the air with a wonderful lightness, and laid straightly and smoothly down to make the square and handsomely compacted load that moves slow and stately up the warm brown slope. Such is the complete and varied grouping of this harvest picture, set in the purest of pure color, and more perfectly harmonized throughout than was even the waving rye-field a month ago. And yet the whole is not more beautiful than is each separate bundle of yellow straw, whose unstudied elegance of form is carelessly crowned with a rich burst of grain, naturally falling into ripe and delicate clusters.

There are men afield, of course, men whose

rough gestures and obvious play of form or feature add greatly to the attraction of the scene; there is one man—the master—of graver and keener air; there is pretty by-play of bright-faced children, hiding behind the stooks and clambering over the loads; and even for ourselves, who are only here as spectators, we cannot hinder our part in the play.

But night comes on apace; the faint tinkle of cow-bells is heard in the hollow; the cattle are released from the yoke and left to graze by the roadside; and sitting in a silent, shadowy group on the cold door-stone we listen to subdued snatches of rude, familiar song,

> "Where the home-bound harvesters
> Hunt the windfalls in the dew."

August Twenty-third.

As I take up my papers for to-day's entry, my eye falls on the last line of the last page written, and suddenly it reminds me of the "harvest apples" that light the orchard with amber and red, and fill the lap of earth with

plenty. Earliest and best of the fall fruitage they seem when tasted under the tree, or out in the harvest fields, or carried by pocketfuls on wild-wood rambles. Or still more rich and satisfying are the largest and sweetest among them when baked and eaten with delicious milk and bread at tea-time.

Yesterday we all went out after breakfast and picked up a basketful—enough for a week of excellent pies and puddings—while the children spilled as many more from their overflowing aprons, and our two-year-old boy toddled after them with one in each chubby fist. To-day I lay and munched on the grass for an hour, and fell asleep at last; and to-morrow, as if by contrast, some fortunate one will discover a seedling tree, with half a score of hard, round apples, whose flavor is yet racy and peculiar enough to afford a new sensation.

August Twenty-fourth.

NOR is this all; for the year is now in its perfect prime, the hedges are black with

heavy drooped clusters of sultry-looking elderberries, and higher up the piquant wild-cherry shakes out its glistening bunches. On warm and grassy slopes the boughs are loaded down with freckled early pears of sprightly, pleasant flavor, and golden Bartletts, with a melting flush on the cheek that is turned toward the sun. Then there are velvety peaches, aglow with tender color; and purple and ruddy bunches of out-door grapes; and luscious blue and amber plums, with an almost impalpable bloom upon them. There are dark-green water-melons, cool and refreshing; and musk-melons, tawny and rich; dusky yellow quinces, and rosy, sour little crab-apples.

In the full and free acceptance of these autumnal gifts we come to feel a just indignation against the many who spoil the edge of their enjoyment by a barbarous haste. Truly he is no lover of fruit who fails to observe a perfect correspondence between the delicious, fragrant strawberries of June and its rosy blossoming; the subtle heats and the white and

scarlet currants of July, frail, transparent globes on glistening strings; the hot, sweet, shining blackberries of August and its sultry dead-ripeness; the frost-touched grapes and the golden lights of September. Yet pale, tasteless strawberries in April and half-ripened peaches in July have vulgarized the taste of so many that their jaded palates are no longer capable of a fresh sensation. Ah! well it is that Mother Earth gives never grudgingly, and we find no stint in the bounty of wood and field, where all may take their fill, and every want be healthfully supplied.

August Twenty-eighth.

WHILE the children are flying in two or three times a day with blackberries from the road-sides and tomatoes from the garden; while great baskets of delicious green-gages, home-grown peaches and pears, tender young sweet-corn and pyramidal cauliflower are piled on shelves and tables, more than one willing pair of hands must needs be occupied in the work of preservation.

It is easy putting up a few strawberries, or a pail of fresh-picked, wild red raspberries, of a coolish summer evening; and many a rosy jar of dainty sweetmeats have I sealed between early tea and early candle-light in June. But now long mornings and long unbroken afternoons are spent in the patient work of preparation, wiping, trimming and cutting the fruit. The little ones make a frolic of it at first, and many hands make light work, but one by one these volunteer aids slip quietly away, and the zealous few proceed with the real business of the hour.

Perhaps a score of plates are spread with blackberries, slightly stewed and sweetened, then set in a cool oven to dry; or glass jars full of steaming fruit and syrup are plunged in cold water and brought slowly to a boil; or gushing red and amber jellies and rich preserve of odorous quinces, citron-yellow, tempt the eye with transparent gem-like hues.

Then, in the intervals of preserving, another picks her tiny cucumbers and tender

martynias, chops her green tomatoes and boils her delicately spiced vinegar!

Even half-pint glasses may now be had with tops securely screwed,—and this is a convenience, of course; yet the old-fashioned rounds of white paper, plainly written over, and tied or gummed on, give a neat finish to the corner cupboard, as well as to the dusky red and blue jars on the pantry shelves.

SEPTEMBER.

September First.

Idler and vagabond, braggart tree,
  Whose cap is brave with a jaunty feather,
  And scarlet tassel and cord together,
  In the face of the yellow September weather
To flaunt your meaningless gayety !

Out, out, I say, with your gypsy looks ;
  Let trumpery frolic and tinsel be !
  What ! shaking your head with a mocking glee ?
  Little you reck of the world or me,
You vagrant lover of woods and brooks !

Not a vain caprice ? And are such as I
  To be checked by a warning finger—pooh !
  A fig for the frost, and we'll call it true,
  I can be reckless, as well as you,
Fie, little tell-tale, fie, fie, fie !

NOT unlike these, perhaps, are the words that spring to our lips at sight of the first red

tree, which, no matter when or where it shows itself, is always a surprise.

The birches are beginning to take on a faint tinge of straw-color; the hemlocks to darken perceptibly against a background of mellower greens; the stems and lower leaves of the raspberry briers glow as in secret with wonderful blues and reds, when some rash and presumptuous maple flings out a pennant of flame across the way, like a sudden and startling challenge to the passer-by.

It is impossible to help looking at it. We turn away our eyes again and again, but there it is before us; and our only refuge is in that wildest of all merriment which exists in the very face of coming danger. The first bell-gentian uncloses by the roadside, or rather, will not unclose; for under those shut lids there lies a mystery deeper than is even in the shy sister-glance of the fringed gentian. The asters lavish their purple and blue on wild wet banks and narrow lanes; the golden-rod runs riot over the fields, and the blackest of black

huckleberries are still to be tasted on windy hill-tops ranged about with stunted trees. Then let us laugh while we may, with flowers for our adorning, birds and squirrels for boon companions, a wise extravagance in all things, and "wild applause for the wildest folly!"

September Fourth.

"Fling wide the generous grain,—we fling
On the dark mould the green of spring!"

BRYANT.

AN autumn sowing seems at first sight a little confusing, but the analogies are very close between the outward workings of Nature and the lessons of skilled labor. Does not the humblest wayside weed scatter its winged seed as soon as it is brought to maturity? And are not the tree-germs forming in hidden leaf-buds and flower-stems?

The "grateful ground" responds with fervor to this late bestowal, and upland curves are tinged with brightening green; or, later still, there appears no surface hue till the fields are naked and white with frost.

" Hark ! from the murmuring clods I hear
Glad voices of the coming year ! "

How rich in suggestiveness is this "Song of the Sower," and how its steady, rhythmic beat makes music in my thought! The song and shout of coming harvesters, the deep hum of the mill-wheel, the clatter of the flail, mingle with the "free and joyous sweep" of the arm that strews the seed upon the expectant soil.

And again, with what hope and confidence we say:

" The tempest now may smite, the sleet
All night on the drowned furrow beat,
And winds, that from the cloudy hold
Of winter breathe the bitter cold,
Stiffen to stone the mellow mould,—
Yet safe shall lie the wheat ;
Till, out of heaven's unmeasured blue,
Shall walk again the genial year,
To wake with warmth and nurse with dew
The germs we lay to slumber here ! "

September Eighth.

LET it never be said that the lover of beauty is no utilitarian, or that the bright-faced farm-

er's daughter is not as truly a child of the soil as are his brown and rugged boys. She laughs at sun and wind, at autumn heat and wintry chill, and gaily mounts the toppling hay-wagon or jolts peaceably over the stones in the empty cart, that she may see and mingle with it all.

If lines of equal sweep and symmetry ally themselves in her thought to the scenes and actions of every day, their outward seeming is surely based on the elemental plan. And while she is quick to feel the poetry of earth, which lightens plain and common things, she has no less thoroughly identified herself with the world's work, and made herself familiar with many of its best results.

To-day they are digging potatoes in the "corner lot;" and leaning over the old stone wall, I watch the jerky, almost automatic motion, and hear the clatter and scrape of hoes, while the heaps of pretty white ovals are growing fast. I could stand all day, I know, with only that ringing rhyme of labor in my ears, but after a while I step down between the hills,

and join in the steady buzz of various expectation.

The land-owner and potato-grower is there, now catching up a hoe and working with sudden eagerness, now watching with ill-concealed anxiety the success of some careful experiment in seed or fertilizers. The men, too, are there, hazarding their jests and rough conjectures, or displaying a refreshing ignorance in view of this extraordinary weight or that surprising yield. A pair of boots, I believe, is a standing offer for the largest single tuber, and as much "the regular thing" as a paper of tobacco in the coal-bush for a four-foot stick of coal; but here they soon get into the spirit of the thing, and work harder for that than for the prize.

Sometimes, too, a man goes by with dog and gun, and several lean on their hoes with a cheerful "hullo!" Or a neighbor pulls up at the turn and displays a deal of well-meaning curiosity, telling long stories, most of which I should not like to vouch for. But such is life,

and we may not care to own how important to us are the "I tell you's" and the "you don't say so's" of the outside world.

September Eleventh.

A raw, chilly day, with an easterly wind and threatening masses of cloud; a damp, dense fog, blotting out the landscape and saturating the air with moisture; a long, cold rain, beating down the flowers in the garden walks, and leaving dripping wet the grass and leaves,—such are the unwelcome signs and changes of early fall.

A hasty glance from my window on first awakening shows the drenched sweet faces of the morning-glories upturned to mine, and a flock of half-grown turkeys are huddled together in a corner, shivering and crying with wind and wet. But a cheerful blaze in the open fireplace and a savory, smoking breakfast enliven the down-stairs rooms, and while leisurely sipping my cup of coffee my thoughts are busy with no sad forebodings, but with

growing plans and timely suggestions for the wet and windy mornings of autumn.

The first touch of coziness and comfort is in the open wood fires—the dancing light, the crackling flames, and, above all, the enticing warmth. Then, if possible, should there be some unwonted touches of color in dress and upholstery, points of scarlet and blue that fasten the eye. And the concoction of dainty dishes, skilfully combined, is an art not at all to be despised, since the growing coolness has given a new and keen relish for well-prepared food. After a day made tolerable by such good cheer, the evening lamp is early lighted, and, as the evenings lengthen, the books, the games, the conversations of winter nights are well begun. True, there are weeks of perfect dreamy weather yet to come, when the near approach of winter will seem like a myth in the still sunshine; but to-night, as I search with one long look the rainy darkness, I feel its presence near me with a haunting chill.

September Fifteenth.

ONCE more the illimitable days are woven of haze and sunshine, and on the long bright wolds the buckwheat fields are turning brown, —brown streaked with olive and tinged with red, like the colors of health on a sunburnt cheek. There are dull, dusky reds and tawny golds in the strips of woodland that island the plain; the woodbine flings out a scarlet creeper from its background of rich maroon, and the ivory walnut slips its outer covering of dingy green, while the chestnuts in their satin-lined bed are already of a delicate fawn-color.

Along the winding wood-paths, too, there are wonderful bits of color,—red-veined and black-tipped whorls on the slender cucumber-root, white and pale-green and straw-tinged ferns, blackberry vines and milk-weed pods with satin-winged seeds, russet oak leaves and pale-blue berries of dogwood on reddish stems.

But, on the whole, there is nothing richer

and more splendid than the acres of ripe buckwheat that the men are cradling as it falls in thick brown bunches of tiny, triangular, glossy seeds. Or when it stands in crumpled heaps about the field, and, treading under foot the dry, harsh stubble, whose dull greenish hue shall yet be heightened and deepened to a "fine wine of color," with one arm thrown about the neighboring stack, we inhale the curious pungent odor, and taste the sweet powdery kernel that parts so readily from the hull, and hearken to the insect murmurs, and the intervals of sound from a wandering cow-bell, and now and again some unfamiliar bird-cry,— then, if ever, do we know that we live, and not by bread alone.

September Eighteenth.

"CORN and pumpkins" is one of the traditional crops of New England, and I feel aggrieved whenever I see the one without the other. It is an insult to the memory of our fathers and of the olden time.

In the fields about us now the corn is already shocked, and its dun stalks and maize-colored tops, with "the pumpkin's yellow chrome across weedy acres," make an autumn picture to match the reaped buckwheat field, "in brown and scarlet set!"

Later come on the huskings, which are often held in the field as late as Indian Summer, the heaps of yellow ears lying out in the thin blue atmosphere, and warming through the mellow haze. In the great barns there is occasionally a rough pretence at a "husking-bee,"—what a pity that such a gay, hearty custom,

> "When jests went round, and laughs that made
> The house-dog answer with his howl,
> And kept astir the barn-yard fowl,"

should ever have fallen into disuse!

Is not this, too, a fit time to speak of those ancient dainties, hasty-pudding and pumpkin pie? Joel Barlow, the Revolutionary poet, has smoothed the way to the former, and is it not melancholy that Indian cakes and corn

muffins have found favor in many households, till the making of an old-fashioned hasty-pudding has come to be a lost art? None the less has the jovial squash usurped the place of the pumpkin, and although I always eat the modern substitute under the good old name, I find something of delicacy and savor in a well-prepared pumpkin pie, which the squash, with its superior richness and color, can never hope to equal.

September Twenty-first.

WHEN first a chill of gray foreboding strikes through the brief fall twilights, and the unmistakable touch of frost is in the evening air, then first do we withdraw ourselves from the sweet company of the outside world, and hasten away from the shivering forms without, to draw closer the chairs within.

Two or three times already has some one warned us of impending disaster, and running out with an armful of shawls, we have covered lightly our summer favorites, while the

Potted house-plants looked green and thriving in the warm and sheltered windows. But to-night we know it is no false alarm that sends us out for a farewell look, and with mingled pain and pleasure we break off great bunches of heliotrope and geranium, and strip the melon and tomato vines of their lingering store. These latest treasures gradually enrich the deserted rooms, and smoulder in purple and red through the strange lonely mingling of twilight and firelight.

And when half an hour later we shut ourselves in, with books and talk, from all remembrance and regret, we know that for six long months we must be all in all to ourselves and to each other, and make a gentle warmth about us, like the rabbit or the squirrel in his winter nest.

We know that the earliest peep of day will show a waste of whiteness, with the light crystalline touch of the hoar-frost on every blade and spear of grass. And later, when the coaxing fall sunlight hovers about the south garden-

wall, the tender morning-glories will hang limp and blackened, the scarlet and blue salvias will shrink as under a blight, and some dropped cluster of forgotten fruit will turn a rosy frost-bitten cheek to the sun.

September Twenty-second.

BUT no sooner do we look for these unchecked early frosts, and realize the danger to our more delicate field-flowers and tender garden-blossoms, than the wisest among us sally forth and weave from lanes and by-ways an autumnal crown. On the face of a steep and shelving rock with a southerly exposure, where jagged hemlocks gain but scanty foothold, and beech and maple embower the grassy slope beyond, the frost grape clasps its interlacing fingers, and hangs rich bunches from the trellised bank. Clambering over the wayside steep for the rare spoil of purpling clusters, and loosening by hand or foot the wandering vines, we unbind at last a garland of sylvan wildness, and taste its subtle fragrance, its exquisite bloom and hue.

Again we walk or drive along an old stone wall which has sunk in places into a heap of lichened ruins, with a low red house beside it that has fallen into disuse, and a mulleined pasture studded with mossy apple-trees. There would we disengage the tangled vines of bittersweet, with their waxy yellow berries which open and display the seeds enclosed in a scarlet pulpy aril.

Or wandering by the brookside and in among the alders, and plunging waist-deep in thistles and golden-rod, we push through a very thicket of virgin's-bower, whose tender greenish masses uncurl when broken, and form soft smoky clusters in the warmth of the house.

Then, too, we pluck the golden-rod itself, the tallest and finest stems of all, and for months it keeps its velvety bloom and color of old gold. With it come delicate filmy stars of Michælmas daisies, and great bunches of pearly everlastings, and even rare fringed gentians, so perfectly pressed as to hold their divine sweet

blue. Nor will it do to forget the dainty sheaf of wild grasses now hanging in a dark corner of the store-room, nor the white downy thistle-balls pinned up in another, nor the atlas filled with beautiful ferns, nor fifty other lovely things brought in by one or another and held in readiness for Christmas decorations.

Friend, good-by ; the spoken word
On thy dulled ear falls unheard ;
These I take, and hold them fast,
These pale tokens are thy last.
Nay, the fleeting chill that slips
From thine icy finger-tips,
And thy fixed and glassy eye
Bid good by.

Welcome, friend ; the greeting said
Brings a message from the dead ;
In my outstretched hand there lie
Vanished hopes and tears run dry ;
Since thy touch and blighting breath
Pass unharmed my charméd wreath,
Gifts another gave to me
I give thee !

Summer goes with noiseless tread,—
Summer is the beauteous dead ;
Kisses cold in blackened bowers
Are her gifts of fruit and flowers.

Winter comes, shod soft with snow,
On his cheek a frosty glow,
In his locked embrace doth last
All that's past.

September Twenty-fifth.

GREAT over-laden bunches of brown seeds with red-poll linnets feeding in flocks upon them; scarlet haws mixed with brown leaflets and slender thorns, and wild-rose hips as fresh and hardy; solitary blue-black berries, frost-touched, but all the sweeter for it,—such is the birds' harvest these short autumnal days.

Not as the wicked black crows, who rob the grain-fields of yellow dropped kernels, nor as the insolent blue jays, who steal from the very corn-crib, but like those other humbler pensioners, I accept the fruits of no visible labor. Mine are the mingling daisies in the meadow grass, mine the black-eyed gypsies that riot among the nodding grain; all that breaks loose or runs wild, all that climbs over the wall and creeps along the border of cultivation, is mine beyond dispute.

I follow and glean in the harvest-fields of honorable toil; but the weedy, wild luxuriance of tangled fence-rows is under my sickle and bound in my sheaves.

Mine, too, are the frosty airs and lights of autumn, the deep blue sky, the gold of the grain, the green-tinged russet of the crisp short grass. For no farmer need suppose that his work is to conquer and subdue the land, or even to possess it; he is the master-servant, obedient to command, and receiving again the measure of his capacity. He earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, while another receives the wages of time and of eternity.

Perhaps the birds' harvest may be the richer after all!

September Thirtieth.

THE county fair, with its all of cheerful, wholesome interest and legitimate reward, is with us the farmer's yearly holiday and merry-making.

Gathering together, as it does, the rural

population for miles around, it takes on the added importance of a social occasion, and affords to the many a safe resort for harmless gossip and pleasant chat, to the few a free interchange of ideas and remaking of opinions. But this is only an aside from more substantial gains,—the fostering of an honest pride, a generous rivalry, and the schooling of the modern progressive farmer to better methods and larger results.

Our fair is held during three days in the last week of September, and each one of the three lays separate claim to value and attractiveness. The first is perhaps the best, for on that day the people are mostly in dead earnest. In the morning the several exhibits are arranged, and one is really better repaid by watching these unfinished labors of care and painstaking, than by any after examination, however systematic and thorough. The afternoon is largely devoted to "cattle-show," the best part of the whole for lovers of fine animals. The exhibition of stock is usually a good one, and the

veriest know-nothing may admire the dainty thoroughbred heifers and magnificent bulls, whilst good judges discuss "points" and compare pedigrees. Nobody remembers a year when it did not rain in fair-time, and it may be that a mild, steady drizzle on the first day, minded little by "old stagers" or muddy enthusiasts, interferes least with the business or pleasure of the hour.

The second day is the family turn-out, on which the wife and children are expected to have a good time and to see all there is to be seen. The exhibits in the hall are swept around in imposing array, and with music and merry-go-rounds is made manifest an air of festivity as short-lived as are the red balloons that are borne along by the crowd.

The third day closes with exercises in the hall and the general distribution of spoons. Nobody pretends to sit it all out, I believe, but for an hour conveniently short, one can do nothing better than to listen while the roll is called, and note the shrewd comments, silent

or otherwise, on the several awards. The gray-beards on the platform, the little knot of reporters whispering and chuckling in the gallery, the restless and varied audiences, the loud monotonous tones and gruff responses,—all help to relieve the dulness of a long and tedious session.

As the dinner-hour approaches, all sorts of expedients are tried. Some go home; some munch uncomfortably on the grass; some hastily gulp down ham and gingerbread, leading sticky-fingered children with pop-corn balls; some repair to their carriages with bread and grapes, and the rough and ill-served eating-houses are filled to overflowing. Why not have rude tables and benches for picnicers set out under the trees, where a generous home lunch may be eaten with comfort; good hot dishes served at clean and roomy tables; and better still, a capital dinner, with all good cheer, gotten up behind the scenes by and for members only, or some few choice spirits among them?

But while an intelligent interest may go the rounds, from mammoth pumpkins to floral wonders, from farm wagons and implements to patchwork quilts, from snowy bread and biscuit to indifferent art,—the universal study of character is best worth while. There are types here of every degree of markedness; the grubbing, hard-featured farmer and the amateurish young dairyman elbow each other in the crowd; the round-eyed, red-cheeked country lass and the loud-mannered, overdressed village girl are jostled together; here is a comely, prosperous matron, and there a gaunt spinster with the worn sharpness, the aggressive ignorance of lone New England women.

Yet with all there is a growing fund of patience and good-humor which, more than all else, it may be, makes the county fair and "cattle-show" emphatically "a good thing."

OCTOBER.

October Second.

"And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground."

TENNYSON.

NOW comes the festival of the squirrels, careful and provident with all their reckless jollity; of the children, brown and lithe as they, who whirl in elfin dance through the yellowing leaves, and of all emboldened by lucky chance or life-long familiarity to make good their claim with children and squirrels.

A fortnight ago there were some to beat down the unopened burrs, and with skilful fingers search out the hidden treasure; but now the ripe, perfect nuts are dropping rustlingly,

and a slight jarring of the tree-trunks with a large flat stone brings down a prickly rain. The chipmunk whisks behind the old rail fence, shrilling a note of mingled fear and defiance, as we draw forth from some warm hollow handfuls two or three of his secret hoard. Brown and polished, and streaked with darker hue, glossy and smooth as satin, and tufted with silk, we gather them up by twos and threes from crevices in the wall, from the nestling leaves and crumbling sod.

Nothing, indeed, could be fuller of fun than the nutting party, unless—and here we have the crowning jollity of autumn—unless it be the same party drawn up around a blazing fire at evening, with apples and popcorn and a "chestnut boil!" Golden gleaming lights and frost-touched leaves, filmy rings of asters, faintly purple-tinged, make one picture; glorious warmth and laughter, curling lips and dancing eyes, the other! So do we gather with light festivity in the wood and about the hearth.

October Fourth.

Out in the wood, in the open glade,
In the crimson autumn weather,
There are gypsy faces laugh out from the shade,
And dark-wreathed locks in the sinking sun,
And all together they romp and run,
The dark and the fair together,—
Where the gold with the brown month interweaves
They come,—the harvesters of leaves!

The leaves are ripe for the kiss of frost,
And the lamp burns blue o'erhead;
The beech and chestnut are yellow as wheat,
The maple and oak blood-red.
A touch, and the joining of stems is lost,
And with clutching fingers and hurrying feet,
They are raking and binding their scattered sheaves,—
The happy harvesters of leaves.

What weary worker was ever found
In a light fantastic whirl,
Where over the red-strewn, leaf-thick ground
His hard-won harvest was straightway bound
At the hands of a blue-eyed girl?
No after-weariness undeceives
The idling harvester of leaves.

For streaked and pied and russet and red
The wild-wood carpet is softly piled,
And the wood-path echoes the rustling tread
Of each slow-footed child;
All empty-handed, and winding back,
Lagging of limb, on their homeward track,
They drop forgotten their red-gold sheaves,—
They are only harvesters of leaves.

October Seventh.

The fringéd gentian to the sky
Her pure face turneth tenderly,
And golden all the woodlands lie,—
The chestnuts dropping rustlingly,
And from the hawthorn's crimsoned bough
The pheasant's brood whirrs joyously!

D. H. R. G.

THE distant report of a gun is a somewhat barbarous and unaccustomed sound to startle the echoes on long and lonely walks, where, in the intervals of silence, "a dozen pairs of strong wings thrill like thunder through the arches of the wood."

Yet a stray handful of practised sportsmen take a chance bout now and then at woodcock and quail, and more often a "good shot" among the colliers and farm hands goes off with a rusty firelock, and a mongrel cur at his heels, to pick off a couple of wild pigeons feeding upon the buckwheat stubble. The partridge, however, is the bird most sought for by our huntsmen and woodsmen, while country

boys set their snares for the pretty, unsuspecting creatures, and bring them in with the soft bronzed plumage ruffled, the bright eyes glazed, and the long neck hanging limp and cold, to the wonder and dismay of the children.

This is one way of looking at it, but from another point of view, this snaring is a very pretty business. One learns the habits of these timid forest denizens more quickly and naturally, perhaps, than in any other way. The bended sapling, the notched and pointed twigs, the nicely adjusted string with its dainty slip-noose, the tempting apple-bait,—what a harmless-looking arrangement on the dry and fallen leaves! Yet not only the birds, but the rabbits, their second cousins, fall a helpless prey.

Later in the season, the hardy, snow-loving partridge, "whose wings seem to rustle with more fervency in mid-winter," is picked off in the very act of "budding" on a rugged old apple-tree or yellow birch. And across the

down-trodden path of the white hare, in the deepest recesses of the mountains, that treacherous noose is suspended, while only a passing glance is given to bird and mouse and squirrel tracks, or the larger print of fox and wild cat in the light fresh snow.

October Eleventh.

MY DEAR CIPHER:

You never can guess to what an escapade your dignified friends consented on a late auspicious occasion,—the party numbering Mr. and Mrs. Zero, Mr. and Mrs. Nought, and the Misses Ditto. Fancy, if you can, the graceful and self-possessed Mrs. Nought, looking taller and paler than ever in her plain black, seated on the topmost round of a ladder, and filling her half-bushel basket with deft, quick fingers! Fancy Mr. Zero's convenient length in the fork of a particularly inaccessible tree, and pelted with apples by a couple of mad-cap girls!

But there!—in the first place, you city peo-

ple can never be made to understand that what is fun to you is death to us. One cannot be forever looking on; and after "eyes with gazing fed" on the streaked and splendid piles of home-grown apples — those hardy, genial products of harsh New England soil—a day of fruitful toil is glowing with positive enjoyment, and gives to country life its fullest zest.

The skies were fair on that memorable morning, the weather propitious, and the scene of our labors an unusually attractive one. But picture to yourself an irregularly beautiful orchard, with rugged tree-forms in massive combination, and rows of trees in laden curves, whose lower branches swept the ground. The horses were tethered on a grassy knoll hard by, and behind a green-bronze screen of leaves great baskets were emptied and replenished, while the crimson and wood-color and blue of the ladies' dresses suggested the gay plumage of some tropical birds.

Unflagging was the energy displayed by the

sparkling and courageous Mrs. Zero, whose basket swung from a loaded branch and was managed with skill by a coil of rope. Many were the harum-scarum feats performed by the gentlemen, such as swinging by one hand and dropping from limb to limb, or climbing a ladder supported by strong arms and resting upon air. The younger of the two girls, a romp of fourteen, showed a rare combination of dash and daring with the freshest wit, and her gentlemen friends had much ado to defend themselves against her gay challenging laughter and pin-points of sarcasm.

A rich and varied luncheon was spread upon the grass, the farmer's wife contributed a cup of hot tea, and white bread and brown, canned meats, tomato soup, and such like substantial dainties were spiced with talk and banter and repartee. You remember your old friend Nought, who invariably mended his timeworn jokes with fresh and timely merriment,—and such jokes, you will readily see, could not bear writing down. Then we freely discussed

the ladies' exploits, and between jest and earnest defended woman's claim to a larger field of usefulness.

But before the sun got low the hampers were repacked, the apples left basking on the grass to await the arrival of the farm wagon, and—and—good-bye, dear! and believe me

Truly yours,

AND SO FORTH.

October Fourteenth.

A RETURN to the primitive forms of cider-making would doubtless be considered a step backward in methods of use. Yet we were all charmed with what we saw of them in one of the rural districts a short time ago,—the straw-laid press, the wooden screw and lever turned by horse-power, the pleasant processes all openly carried on in the sunny, crisp October air. A halt opposite the ring, a word with the men, and a cool, pleasant draught of the amber liquid—pure, unfermented apple-

juice—was freely accorded to us as to the privileged few.

No treat was ever more eagerly welcomed by country children than an invitation to help pick up the windfalls and half-wild apples and take them to the cider-mill. What jolting over the narrow mountain-roads into steep, rocky pastures and "side-hill lots;" what climbing half-way up the rough, gnarled branches, and sending down a shower of rosy, hard little apples that danced away down the brook slope and hid themselves in the brown, slippery grass! Witness these verses written years and years ago, and beginning

> The apple wild, I feel its charm,

then going on with

> Its sisters in the orchard shade
> Are large and luscious, sweet and mellow,
> Their rosy blushes mingling laid
> On riper tints of tender yellow:
> Its wilful little knotty cheek
> Is painted with a crimson stain;
> It stirs the grass beneath your feet,
> Warm with warm suns, and wet with rain!

And so through half a score of differing stanzas, till

> Born with the May, in rosy bloom,
> It falls upon October's bier.

I have a fondness for sweet cider, and an honest liking for even the very hardest, in the stinging cold of mid-winter, so it be not flat and thin. Cider is (or should be) to the hardy, bold New Englander what the light wines of the Mediterranean slopes are to the Italian peasants, and why should not the grinding of the apples be as much an autumn festival as is the purple vintage? Surely no splashing of blood-red grape-juice, or heaping of purple clusters, could be fairer in our eyes than the homely fashion of cider-making, and the "yellow, russet, red" of the daily augmented piles.

October Eighteenth.

NOW that the old-time "New England kitchen" is no longer a matter of pride, or even of curiosity, our thrifty housekeepers

are making of theirs a mere mechanical contrivance, and we are in danger of losing more than we think, with the hospitable doors, the roaring fire-places, and the generous "brick ovens."

The kitchen need not now be the pleasantest room in the house; the dining-room is in part a modern substitute; the library a new and rich possession; the funereal parlors are bedecked and lightened, and the small, cold chambers made habitable. But I do protest against a glossing over of the simple and kindly offices of our common humanity,—and the farm-house kitchen should be, in some sense, the heart of the house. Do not shrink from the sound of your hammer-strokes, and let the nails show.

Then nothing is better in its way than are the homely joys of fall and winter evenings before the kitchen fire. From pressing leaves to chopping mince-meat, these cheerful duties are many and widely different; but to-night the cider is bottled! A straw inserted in the

bung-hole has served to test the degrees of fermentation, and now the critical moment has arrived, and the cider, taken at just the right stage of dainty piquancy, will sparkle and effervesce into the most delicious of home-made drinks.

> The green-globed bottles ranged in line,
> The plump corks simmering on the fire,—
> Well versed in every mystic sign,
> We clip the lengths of glittering wire,—

while up the cellar stairs come the foaming pails of cider, two by two, and a raisin or two, a grain of rice, or a spoonful of sugar in each bottle, makes a lively combination with the clear, straw-colored liquor.

October Twentieth.

Mother (calling).—Daugh-ter!

Daughter (faintly).—Yes!

Mother (at the foot of the garret stairs).—Where *are* you?

Daughter (from above).—Here!

Mother (toiling up the narrow, steep stairway).—Aren't you ever coming?

Daughter.—In a minute!

Mother (seating herself at the top, quite out of breath).—Well, my dear, what *can* you find to amuse you in this bare, cold garret hour after hour? Here I've been searching for you high and low!

Daughter (struggling to her feet in an absent-minded way).—Yes, mother, I'm so sorry! What shall I do?

Mother.—So you've been looking over those old files of your uncle's papers? Those illustrated weeklies published in war time would interest you, I know.

Daughter (eagerly).—Yes, indeed; and these magazines of forty or fifty years ago, with their queer, stilted comments on public affairs, their literary and political gossip, and absurd fashion-plates!

Mother.—That is true, and such reading is really valuable for its vivid presentation of past times and people. But speaking of fashion-plates, have you tried on any of grandma's antique finery? This was part of her wedding-

gown; and this bonnet, dear me! I wore it myself when I was a girl! I remember it as if it were only yesterday.

Daughter.—It was a good idea of auntie's to hang the bare, raftered wall with this ancient patchwork. It looks so comfortable and gay! Then, with the strip of rag-carpet in the middle of the clean, stained floor, the broken spinning-wheel and three-legged table, piled with dingy, odd old books, and the cunning, three-cornered window,—it is perfect.

Mother.—Yes; I never knew a pleasanter garret than this; it is spotlessly neat, and still it has the dear old rubbish and the ancient cobwebbed charm.

Daughter.—And yet you said—

Mother (hastily interrupting).—These bed-quilts, now; your aunties and I pieced them as children. Each square has a story belonging to it. These books have our childish names scribbled all over the fly-leaf; and here is great-grandfather's family Bible, with all the births, marriages and deaths down to the present gen-

eration. Your own name and birth-date, see, in grandma's feeble, trembling hand!

Daughter (after a pause).—This queer little trunk in the corner, with its tarnished gilt leather and rusty hasps,—what is in it, do you know, mamma?

Mother (brightening).—Why, those are our old family papers,—colonial grants and commissions under King George, old wills, letters —some day you must study them all up. Your great-great-grandfather was a very remarkable man, my dear, of whom you may well be proud.

Daughter (examining them carefully).—Look at the yellowed paper, the faded ink, the great red seals and almost illegible writing!

Mother (rising and laying a hand on the top of the stairway).—But there! you have kept me talking so long that I almost forget what I wanted you for. (Shivering.) And we shall both of us have caught our deaths of cold.

Daughter (crossing to the chimney-corner and filling her lap with hickory-nuts).—Let's

take down a dish of nuts and have them cracked this evening, with apples and a pitcher of egg-cider.

(Sound of steps on the carpetless floor. A merry peal of laughter echoes through the hall, with the playfully triumphant words: "But what do you think of the garret, mother, as a family institution?")

October Twenty-third.

"Cleave the tough greensward with the spade,
Wide let its hollow bed be made;
There gently lay the roots, and there
Sift the dark mould with kindly care."

BRYANT.

OVER the broad swell of gently varied surface that crowns our stately hill-slopes, the indomitable three have walked with measuring eye and hand, planning groups and masses in fine proportion, and determining their relative positions.

A load of young trees, whose brown, clinging roots pierce a black ball of earth, and whose

light tops bend and sway in graceful mingle-ment, is followed to the brow of the ascent, where, from point to point, the distances are marked with truth and accuracy.

Now the first spade is struck, the mound of earth thrown up, and a slender, swaying elm brought into position, denuded of its budding tips and branchlets by a wise severity. The upturned sods are replaced with care, the soil stamped down into all the crevices of root and bark, great stones laid up for firmer support; and another set in turn.

The broad swale beyond is planted with tamaracks, willows and elms; oak and chest-nut, black and yellow birches, trees wild and picturesque mark the rocky knoll; the rise is characterized by a softer growth of ashes and sugar-maples, descending southward to the brook side by soft maple and water-beech. On the northern exposure a long, irregular line of hemlock and spruce, with a few deciduous trees to the south and west, forms an effective wind-break, and a graceful group of the more

unusual and striking kinds, as the stately tulip-tree, breaks the long eastern slope.

Then, too, the clumps and borders of spontaneous growth are simply and effectively massed, not forgetting the low, broad wall that is to be, the well-laid wall of native uncut stone, hedged about with blackberry and golden-rod, and richly festooned in autumn by

> "The frost-grape with its dusky blue,—
> Clematis vine, whose misty wreath
> Veils bitter-sweet beneath!"

There is nothing we can do, my farmer friends, which lends so much character and dignity to a place as the judicious planting of trees. Let us soften down the harsh, forbidding angles of our New England homesteads, harboring a delicious warmth, a grateful coolness. Let us plant out our dusty, staring highways, not in straight lines, but in naturally broken and varied groups. Let us screen our barns and plowed fields with clumps and fine single trees, leaving broad, irregular masses of

shade in meadow and pasture. So shall man repair with skilful touches the ravages of man.

Lovelier by far and far more fitting than the foreign, stilted specimens of nurserymen, are the simple, noble forms of our own forest trees, whose gradually enriching color and outline mingle with the wooded slopes of the surrounding country. And our own half-wild barriers, lichened walls and cedar posts,—what beside them are formal trimmed hedges of hemlock and arbor-vitæ?

Who has not walked some winding wood-path or cart-track, or grass-grown highway of dog or fox, with a thought of the hidden suggestions in every slight inequality? So in the laying out of grounds, the marking of roads and boundary fences, we should have no arbitrary lines, no meaningless curves; but for every abrupt turn, every gentler gradual sweep, a corresponding rock or tree or soft irregularity of surface. If we follow the "lay of the land," keeping alike its sharp descents and exquisite

gradations, and studying the living forms of wood and water with untiring love, we can easily dispense with technicalities and artificial contrasts, knowing well that we cannot go very far wrong.

October Twenty-sixth.

"STUFF!" exclaims the hard-headed old farmer, very bluntly and decidedly; "sentimentality," says the fond parent, with an indulgent smile; but is it not possible that they neither of them know just what they are talking about?

It is never hard to find the man who can be hired to kill, and your hog or fat cow may readily be dispatched at home in a more or less workman-like manner; but it strikes me that the muttered talk of your men, interspersed though it be with rude jests and noisy laughter, has in it something of superstitious horror, of ignorant fear. What was it I heard about whether the greater wrong were done in killing a horse or a cow? Who was it that

would not be bribed or threatened into drowning a sick kitten,—"he had done it once and never wanted to again"?

Yes, your boy will drown or torture the kitten and take a savage pleasure in it; he will wring the chickens' necks if your little kitchen-maid will not; and the men are not apt to trouble themselves much about the annual butchering, so far as you can see! They are used to it, indeed; and are not moved by the horror of it as are certain tender-hearted women, who yet will sacrifice nothing to their feelings, unless it be another's peace of mind.

For yourself you have no scruples; these pigs and chickens are good for nothing else; you have cared for them all their lives to no other end; and doubtless you are right. But are you not under some obligation to your fellow-creatures, whose lives are given in your service?

When the old "pet pony" broke his leg, it was an act of mercy rather than of necessity to put an end to his sufferings. I honored

the rough men who could not bear to shoot that faithful servant, with his speaking eyes turned toward them, and I honored still more the one who felt it hard, but had the courage for it. And unless I am much mistaken, more than one of you were moved to tears.

October Twenty-ninth.

This is the wheat,—
The wheat well-grown, man's lawful spoil,
The new-plucked fruit of patient toil;
Pledge me the farmer's sinewy hand,—
His goodly acres waiting stand;
Pledge me the hands his force can wield
To plow, to sow, to reap the field!
Bruise the bright heads and break them sore,
Scatter the chaff from door to door,
Show me the kernel sound and sweet,—
The nation's bread, the winnowed wheat

This is the flail,—
The noisy flail, whose loud uproar
Wears on the oaken threshing-floor;
A measured beat, a ringing round,
A hardened resonance of sound!
The long, low scaffolds wax and wane,
Down drop the sheaves of garnered grain,
And empty, careless, laughter-wild,
The yellow straw is loosely piled.

Those level crashings tell the tale,—
Swing round the flail, the mighty flail!

These are the men,—
The men who cleave, with sturdy stroke,
A fallen giant's heart of oak,
Now build for life, and life's demands,
And fill with bread the waiting lands.
Clash rhyme with rhyme, the thresher's song,
Deal blows on blows, strike loud and long;
The wrench of hunger drives at length
The iron of unyielding strength;
Wield the bent blade,—again, again,
And serve the puny race of men!

NOVEMBER.

November Third.

A SOUND of rolling barrels, like distant thunder, a rat-tat-tat of hammer and nails, a clatter of wooden shovels and rumble of voices echo along the floor, till we half believe that wicked gnomes are burrowing underground.

Let us take the kitchen candle-sticks of well-scoured brass, and warily descend the cellar-stairs, creeping over great white piles of empty sacks, and stumbling through a long and narrow passage by the light flickering flame of our taper, a mere will-o'-the-wisp in the face of unexplored darkness.

A hollow vault of blackness, floored with straw and walled with stone, opens up before

us. From an oaken beam depends a huge lantern, such as swung before some country tavern a half century or more ago. The floor is heaped high with whity-brown tubers; rows of barrels, with yawning mouths, stand ready to receive them, and three men, one of whom directs the work, stalk about like gigantic shadows. For the dusty, cob-webbed corners of the room are dimly visible, faces and figures are much of the time in deep shadow, and whatever comes within the radiating core of light is thrown out in bold and startling relief. Were it not for the eminently respectable and amusingly ordinary avocation in which they are steadily engaged, the familiar features somewhat strengthened and the familiar tones subdued by the unusual place and hour, we might even now keep up the grim pleasantry of a fancy half charming and half grotesque.

But never gnomes or hobgoblins came up from the underworld with such a clatter of big boots on the wooden stairs, while Mary fetched from the "yellow cupboard" at the stair-

foot and set out on the kitchen table such cider and fragrant gingerbread and toothsome apple-pie!

November Eighth.

A DARK, wet, windy morning, a regular north-easter, in fact; yet not freezing, thank fortune, and lest it should clear off colder, those potatoes must be shipped to-day! At eight o'clock three lumbering farm wagons and two yoke of oxen are standing under my window, while a couple of men roll barrel after barrel along the muddy track from the cellar door, grasp them firmly, if somewhat awkwardly, in their hands, raise them to the wagon-box, steady them with an arm, swing themselves off the box and leave them on end in the approved position.

Rather an animated scene that I look out upon with such suddenly-awakened interest: what with the curly square heads with dripping hats pulled over the ears, that vanish from sight through the cellar door, and pop

out again as unexpectedly; the good-humored, energetic faces, with a fresh color in the tanned and bearded cheek; the rough, shapeless overcoats and checked shirt-sleeves; and behind them all a transparent swaying curtain of mist and rain. Perhaps one or another of them has occasion to cross the road to the barns and out-buildings, and whether he dashes into the pelting storm with head up and colors flying, or plods doggedly through the mud with head and shoulders thrown well forward, or swings along at an even, indifferent pace, the movement is a characteristic one, and well worthy an amused attention.

In the course of an hour or thereabouts the ox-teams are started, with two boys perched on barrels, and one of them vainly wrestling with an inverted umbrella, while the horses are led out and harnessed by a practised hand.

Ten minutes later and this last one has buttoned up his overcoat, jerked down his hat, taken his seat and the lines at the same time, and the yellow glint of the moving barrels has disappeared in the gray distance.

November Tenth.

The daylight sky is white and calm,
  The moon's wan ghost looks strangely near ;
The brittle air rings sharp as glass,
  As musically sharp and clear.

The dry, cold air is touched with blight,
  No flowers the stubborn fields beguile,
But in the sere and leafless woods
  The lone witch-hazel's spectral smile.

THESE chill and colorless November days, when earth stands all aghast at the secret ravages of her insidious foe, stare us out of countenance with a weird and pale fascination.

The dead brown grass, the short rough stubble inspire the farmer with a vague distrust of the harvest ; even the familiar clamor of the barn-yard is thinned and sharpened and, as it were, spiritualized. The landscape has not that dull, sodden look of late November, when the earth seems heavily asleep and gloomily awaiting its coverlet of snow ; but an ineffable peace, a divine purity suffuse the cold blue distance and the death-like pallor of the

sky. There is something in late autumn which strangely and touchingly reminds one of early spring, and these days are the counterpart of days tender and passionless toward the end of March, without their exquisite feeling of latent warmth.

No Indian summer's ghost betrays
The feverish weakness of decline ;
Looks of unearthly beauty raise
The brow where death has set his sign.

'Tis thus with aged, sightless eyes,—
A disembodied soul is there ;
And speechless, trembling lips devise
The hallowed movement of a prayer.

November Thirteenth.

A GREAT deal has been said of late about the farmer's narrowness of life and restricted intercourse with others. Independence of life and thought is a grand thing, we hold, and so is that original force of character which is only to be nursed in solitude. Better a man of stubborn intellect and rugged virtues than breadth with shallowness and weakness with liberality.

There is always a golden mean, however, and a wider and freer communication with the outside world is much to be desired for the thinking farmer. There must be more or less intercourse between those who have and those who want, and the demand for bread might well be urgent enough to direct an immediate supply. But the farmer must meet the consumer more than half way, and make a market wherever he can; selling on commission in the cities, or "trading it out" in calico and sugar at the village store.

This trade and barter in the necessaries of life seems more in character than buying and selling for a profit, which last has quite too much the air of speculation. It may be said that the educated farmer stakes his knowledge and influence against the other's grain or vegetables; but this is dangerous ground, and not to be rashly ventured upon. The legitimate uses and methods of farming are surely wide and various enough; for what farmer is able, at a moment's notice, to call in specialists

in every department? Some say he should be carpenter, machinist and farmer in one.

Skipping again from theory to practice in the light and inconsequent manner which is perhaps the privilege of a farmer's daughter, I may speak of the various small errands of business and friendliness which fill up the odd minutes at this season of the year. A cow is bought; a few tons of hay are sold; a jar of wonderfully nice butter, a barrel of some particular kind of apples, a pair of pigeons or a new seedling potato, go from hand to hand. Auctions, too, are largely attended by the auction-buying and bargain-hunting class, and excepting only the empty-pockets who go and bid for the fun of the thing, there is not one in ten who does not return encumbered with cheap and useless purchases,—second-hand farm and household utensils, all the way down to the latest household joke, an antique warming-pan.

"'Lection day" has brought the farmers together for a mild exhilaration of political gos-

sip, so delicately spiced that one wonders at the current proverb, "hot as 'lection day." For the slight infusion of sociability is the thing, after all, in this raw November weather, and its very slightness is my only excuse for the rambling pages I have written.

November Sixteenth.

THE unthrifty farmer is an anomaly of nature; and whether he leaves his tools and tool-houses in smooth running order on the approach of winter or lets them fall to rust and ruin from exposure to cold and wet, we can easily judge of these dangerous tendencies of his. The plowshare and the grinning harrow teeth should not lie rusting on the ground; the mower and reaper should stand with all their array of shining knives beside such ruder implements as rake and scythe, as shovel or spade.

Whoever has an eye to the picturesque must look askance at the glittering monotonous machines that drive out the primitive

grace of earlier years; and the farmer's daughter in whom a large infusion of native good sense struggles against contradictions, listens gladly to the most unpractical enthusiast who boldly rides her own pet hobby.

"If this mechanical contriving is carried a little further," she says, "we shall all be run by machinery. I don't believe this world was intended to go like clock-work, to be wound up and to run down." And the theorist informs her that "the machine unmakes the man," and that labor will, in the end, be able to compete with inventive ingenuity.

November Twentieth.

How little we have seen of our cows and calves for six months or thereabouts of summer pasturage, unless we strolled down the cottage way at night-fall, and waited for them at the pasture bars! Now it seems that they have done nibbling at the juiceless November grass, and pull off with a relish the crisp sweet hay, greedily taking their pails of slops stirred

up with meal. Their fall pickings, too, have been rich and varied, browsing among the corn-stalks, devouring the yellow pumpkins and fallen apples, and ranging with evident enjoyment the stripped and harvested fields.

The same may be said of the poultry, whose latest broods are a care no longer, and who have feasted royally on the grain-stubble, weed-seeds, and bags of "screenings," together with delicious morsels of late grasshoppers and frost-bitten fruit. Often, at this season, we taste the nicest of plump chickens, and find the whitest and sweetest of new-laid eggs in the clean straw. During the last fortnight, however, the older birds have been moulting, and warm and highly-seasoned food must be furnished under cover to the naked and forlorn-looking creatures with draggled wings and tail. It is a trying time for them; but most of us are heartless enough to laugh at their shabby and mortified appearance.

The turkeys, which are really half game-birds, troop through the fallen leaves, and gain

a richer flavor from chestnuts and acorns, than from bushels on bushels of Thanksgiving corn. When we have eaten all we can, and sent some to market, there will yet be a fine strutting gobbler, with beautiful bronze-green plumage, and six or eight hens, the pick of the flock, to start with in the spring.

A hen-house must be warm and well ventilated ; it should be large and light ; but with a rich, varied and abundant diet good results may be obtained under somewhat unfavorable conditions. Doubtless the same holds good of cows and horses ; for excellent work is done in every department without all the modern improvements, and imperfect stabling is not half so serious a matter as dry and unsufficient food.

I began by saying that the grazing flocks and herds attracted but little attention from the household coterie ; but winter walks on cold and blustering days may extend no further than the barns, and when the soft bright air tempts us along the brookside and through the

snowy woods, we take them often on our return. Seating ourselves carelessly on a pile of boards, or leaning over the farm-gate, we feel that "sudden warmth whose languor is almost oppressive." Sounds of homely fervency strike upon the ear,—

> "The lazy cock's belated crow,
> And cattle-tramp in crispy snow."

The cows, who are basking quietly in the sun and munching an occasional lock of hay, bestir themselves a little and come up to the bars for us to stroke their rough coats. Even Daisy's delicate fawn-color and Buttercup's dappled skin are less sleek than soft grass to lie upon and dainty summer fare have made them. The black-faced little bull indulges in some rather rough play, and Daisy's calf frolics innocently about him.

We let them take salt from our hands, and amuse ourselves with scattering grain to the fowls. Then the nests are ransacked for eggs; and laughing, stamping, clapping our hands,

we reënter the house by the back door, with a farmer-like feeling of cheerful familiarity with every-day matters.

November Twenty-third.

SULLEN and black is the windless November sky, and the frozen clods of earth creak dismally under foot. There is something miserly in the very aspect of Nature, as if she had provided but scantily for her own wants, and grudged the smallest kindness.

A few half-wild apples, with rosy, withered cheeks, rattle down through the bare branches; seeds and buds of fragrant birch or orchard tree eke out the scanty store of tasteless and shrunken berries. We can only guess at precious hoards of nuts and acorns put thriftily away in leaf-lined nests.

Nevertheless the barns are bursting with grass and grain,—

> "The cellar-bins are closely stowed,
> And garrets creak beneath their load."

Under red roofs and roofs of thatch there is food in frugal plenty; for man has excelled in forethought, in the wisdom and variety of his entertainment.

Now, too, the house-wife's skilful preparation is fairly begun. Rich and savory meats are laid in readiness; the turkey, plump and fair, is overpowered with stuffing and smothered in gravy, and the youngest of the chickens are transformed into that delectable compound,—chicken pie. Puddings and jellies may serve to follow these; whitest and delicatest of pastry, reddest and crispest of wintry apples.

I am not writing a bill of fare, however; the Thanksgiving dinner is, above all, a farmer's festival, and home-grown products, above all, should load his hospitable board. The boys bring apples and pumpkins, corn-meal and maple-sweets and cider; while

> "Girls, whose young eyes o'erflow with mirth,
> Shall peel the fruit by cottage hearth,"

and mingle foreign delicacies of raisins and sugar and chocolate.

When all the farmer's family work heartily together, the fun and sociability are almost as great as on the occasion of the dinner itself; and pleasure comes unbidden in planning for the feast.

November Twenty-fifth.

IF the material blessings of the day are the farmer's peculiar gift, if he turns with pardonable pride to the fruits of his labor on tables other than his own, how much more ardently welcoming is his joy at the wanderers' return. There are many old New England homesteads which are still the cynosure of loving eyes, and the household greetings, the ancient customary gatherings, are among the oldest privileges of land and home.

Thanksgiving Day! What fervent thoughts and sweet renewals of common gratitude blossom out of the old time-sanctioned ceremonial! Men, women and children all over the

land are giving thanks to the farmer as the visible means of God's invisible grace. And is not he too thankful for the blessed frequency of sun and rain, for the direct influence of days and seasons, for the fruitful seed and potent soil?

This is a trying time for him, nevertheless,—a time of change and transition. The old notions are getting more and more unsettled, and new ones are pushing to the front. There is scarcely a typical farmer any longer, so wide are the differences between the scheming speculator, the country gentleman, and the plain hard-working man. I am thankful enough, for my own part, that farming is not money-making, and that some of us, in this rapid and reckless age, must time ourselves to nature. We would make all trade a species of gambling, but we cannot trifle for long with the original calling of our race. Nobody wants or can have more than a living, and nobody need expect to live otherwise than plainly on a farm. The higher wants must be fed from the higher life of man. Substantial labor brings substan-

tial gains, but not the freedom of wide expenditure.

Implements of labor and methods of work have been, of late years, so completely transformed and so ingeniously fostered as sadly to bewilder our brains and confuse our action. Everything has been heard of, from silos to deep-can setting, and much experimental knowledge has its dangerous tendencies. We lay no claim as yet to consistency of theory or practice.

This journal has been written in good faith, and its slightnesses and irregularities are easily explained by a literal reading. I began by scouting those problematic questions of "the farmer's life and labor," and am laughing at my own presumption in undertaking them at last. I have never worn the rose-colored spectacles of city visitors, to whom a fanciful prettiness becomes a sort of craze; I have not looked through the dull, smoked glasses of weary Gradgrinds, who will not discover the most simple and obvious beauties.

And I still insist that the farmer has a great deal to be thankful for. "The possession and use of land" is a grand thing in itself; Emerson is in the right of it, the farmer "stands well on the world." He may doubt and demean himself, but he is what he is. Others may sadly underrate him, but his position is always the same.

Winter, the season of rest, is frankly accepted by him, and the leisure of earth is the farmer's leisure.

November Twenty-seventh.

"And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil."—EMERSON.

HOW many of us can say that? How many of us can identify ourselves in like manner with the rocks and trees of our native place? Crabbed and queer we may well submit to be called, if we but savor a little of the close yet kindly earth.

The rustic neighborhoods of western Massachusetts are quaint and character-full; not so

much in villages, as in lonely hamlets and on scattered hill-farms. It may be that the shallow and frigid soil sometimes stints a man in the matter of ripe knowledge and charitable wisdom; but it is seldom that the frost strikes deep enough to warp his harsher judgments.

On a fine and dry October day, the second of their pilgrimage, five congenial people were driving about the country in a wonderfully easy and gay and independent fashion. Near the summit of a hill, picturesquely steep, commanding a rich prospect with a broad interval of farming land, they noticed the smooth sloping meadows dotted over with dark conical hay-stacks. Some were fresh and firm, and solidly built, some falling quite apart, and others in the last stages of blackness and decay. As they drove slowly on, commenting curiously on these and other signs of ruinous neglect and loss, the deserted homestead came into view. It had once been large and in good condition, now it looked more than neglected or disused; there was something wild and posi-

tively ghastly about it. The doors and windows were falling in, planks were torn up and timbers all awry. Why throw away such valuable property? for it must have been well worth looking to. Then, too, the newly-made stacks, indicating that work had not been wholly discontinued, puzzled and astonished us all not a little.

"This place has a story!" was the general exclamation; and spying out two or three men picking apples in a fine old orchard, the boldest and most insinuating of us all was sent to investigate. Meanwhile we guessed, but not with the proverbial Yankee shrewdness, for the wildest and most improbable stories were every one founded on a disappointment in love!

Romantic weakness is not, however, the peculiar folly of mankind; and the true explanation was much more interesting, and hardly less remarkable. The owner had been a man of hard and miserly disposition, who had kept his wife and daughters in grinding poverty while

he slowly amassed his hard-won wealth. His meanness and selfish obstinacy were such that he sometimes overreached himself. He was now well off and living in the nearest town; his wife was dead, if I remember rightly, his daughters safely married; but the lonely and crotchety old man carried his weakness to the point of monomania. He could not sell his hay for the price he demanded, so year after year it was stacked in the field; wandering cattle ate it, men carried it off by the cart-load, rain soaked and spoiled it, and tons upon tons had rotted down to the ground. Not only the fine rich meadow grass, but many "days' works" in season made a heavy annual loss.

The stingy old farmer was the laughing-stock of all his fellows, and was cheated right and left by those who knew his failing. So his very sharpness and closeness ran to weeds and waste, and in lacking one thing he lacked all.

A single instance will serve to illustrate the eccentricity of a few, but the homely simplicity and shrewdness, the local color and tone,

bordering at worst on harmless and pleasant little oddities, are among the salient features of farm life in New England.

November Thirtieth.

The grape-filled vine is faintly green,
The dusky corn-ears nod unseen ;
To wondering eyes past scenes appear,
The splendid pageant of the year.

Subdued rich music mixes in
The rustling tread and gathering din ;
Exultant swell the trumpets all,
Drums beat the long processional.

The slow sun and the stiffening mould
Subdue late warmth with crowding cold ;
The march of seasons buries deep
The plowshare's curve, the sickle's sweep.

O tardy gains, with cheerful mirth
Brought from the fruitful lap of earth ;
O plumy stalks of silken maize,
And tanned buckwheat in ruddy haze !

Brown, strong and glad the laborer stands,
With gifts and tokens in his hands ;
His roving eyes strike and rebound,
He feels his foot upon the ground.

His massive oxen push and crowd,
He pricks their sides, and laughs aloud ;
His horses' iron hoof-beat rings,—
He curbs the rein, and shouts and sings !

A maiden follows in his train,
Her lap is filled with swarthy grain ;
Binding her shapely head and small,
A black and braided coronal.

She bends upon him in his place
The dusky splendors of her face ;
With lovely archness leans anear
To ransom back the blood-red ear.

The fostering earth, with pure intent,
Yields up its living nourishment ;
Sweet-breathed and calm, in straggling line,
Follow the milky-uddered kine.

The soft rejoicing lovers hear
Melodious sinks upon the ear ;
Like ripened leaves detached at whiles,
Innumerous, dim, in whispering aisles.

But noise of work is harshly blent,
As some rude jangling instrument
By unskilled hands on different keys
Strikes out neglected harmonies.

And garments mean, of sullen dye,
Blot the fair earth and fairer sky ;
Dark faces glower, heavy, grim,
With body bent, and withered limb.

Old and more old, poor and more poor,
They drag their tired feet past my door,
In squalid rags, a hateful round
Of convict-labor, dismal sound !

Accursed time, bring round once more
The march of triumph played before,
The tender, joyful, pride-full strain
From travail wrung, and trampling pain !

Again the trumpet's clarion cry,
The haughty step, the flashing eye,
The fair bold girls, the boys and men,
In thick array bring back again !

Ah, happy they whose loaded wain
Bears fruitful sheaves of heavy grain,
But happier we who see and hear
The thankful beauty of the year !

NOTE. — These papers were first published, in part, in the *Christian Union*, under the title of "A Summer Journal."

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 018 597 139 9